A Neglected Power

and Other Sermons

Charles Edward Cheney

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Chas. Edward Cheney

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AND OTHER SERMONS

By

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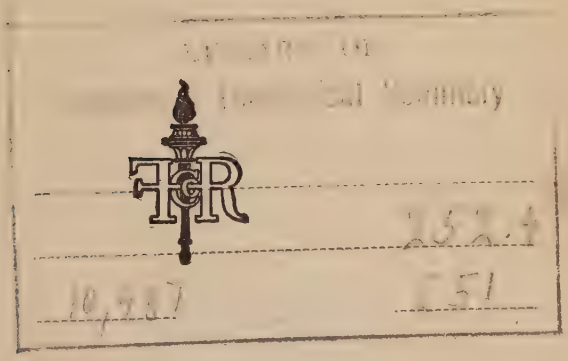

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TO THE BELOVED MEMORY
OF
CLARA EMMA CHENEY

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PREFATORY NOTE

IT is only natural that a minister who looks back upon a happy pastorate in one beloved congregation for a period of more than half a century, should share the feeling of the Apostle Peter;—"*I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.*"

The sermons which this volume contains are taken from those delivered in Christ Reformed Episcopal Church, Chicago, during the last ten years. If their publication shall serve to impress more abidingly the Gospel-message which I have tried to teach throughout my long ministry, it will satisfy a cherished desire of my heart.

C. E. C.

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I

A NEGLECTED POWER

"I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings and for all in authority."

I Timothy 2: 1, 2.

SOME of Life's bitterest trials spring from the inability of the old to sympathize with the young; and of the young to understand the old. The attempt of some later sculptor to supply the ancient Greek statue of Laocoon with a new arm in place of the one broken from the principal figure of the group, is a fitting type of the difficulty of harmonizing the ideas and feelings of Youth and Age.

When freshly-fallen snow has filled up the footprints we left upon our path, it is no easy thing to retrace the way by which we came. Equally hard is it for many of those who near the goal of Life's journey to go back and realize that they were ever young. Yet we know that there are shining exceptions to this general rule. Some aged men seem to exhibit in their spirit and character a perennial youth; and among the young there are those whose springtime produces fruit of an autumnal ripeness and maturity.

Such a picture is presented to the student of the New Testament in the relation between Paul and Timothy. The two evidently understood each other.

It is clear that at the date of the letters which the Apostle wrote to this younger herald of Christ, Paul was an aged man. He addresses Timothy as one comparatively young, not only in the ministry, but in years. But what glowing love is beaming in every line! "My own son in the faith," the Apostle writes, "without ceasing, I have remembrance of thee in my prayers, night and day greatly desiring to see thee." Nor does Paul seem for a moment to doubt that the same sort of affection toward himself warms the heart of Timothy. The filial devotion of the youthful disciple for his father in the faith of Christ, cheered and comforted the older man in all his trials and persecutions.

My text is but a single leaf plucked from the tree of Paul's first Epistle to Timothy. They were widely parted at the time. If the ancient superscription of this letter may be trusted, St. Paul was far to the north, on the wild seacoast of Phrygia, while Timothy had been left to oversee and regulate the affairs of the infant Church at Ephesus.

Mountain ranges rose like walls between them. Rivers parted them asunder. Bleak deserts intervened to separate them. But over mountains, and rivers, and deserts, the arm of intercessory prayer is stretched out, and the hand of Paul seems to hold that of Timothy in the clasp of an unfailing love. May I ask you to follow my line of thought, as we notice—

I. The Rank and Position Which St. Paul Assigns to Intercessory Prayer

As you stood before some historic painting, the canvas crowded with figures, you really saw but a

single one among them all. Its place in the foreground, its peculiar attitude, the commanding dignity of the form, or the strong expression of the face, concentrated your attention upon it till all the others were for the time forgotten. This letter is thick-crowded with momentous truths. But in the grouping of them, the Apostle compels the reader to fasten his attention upon intercessory prayer.

"I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, and intercessions be made for all men."

What an absorbing importance, what a surpassing and imperative necessity, finds expression in that phrase: "First of all"! Surely it makes it clear that St. Paul counted intercessory prayer as among the highest and most pressing duties that God puts upon the Christian.

We often satisfy ourselves that we have done all in our power to help and bless others. Our ability is, in a general sense, the measure of our duty. We cannot be expected to do that which is beyond our power. But the peculiar nature of intercessory prayer is that it puts within our reach a power that is not our own. It lifts us above our native human strength, and clothes us with a divine ability. Suppose I have given my last dollar to my poverty-stricken neighbour. I have not a crust left that I can honestly set before him. The end of my ability has been reached. At that point, does not my responsibility cease? Is not my duty completely done? It may be cold comfort to my neighbour; but I hug the consolation to my bosom, "I cannot be expected to do anything beyond what I have already done."

Am I sure about that? What about my friend engaged in vast trade, employing an army of men in his business, who said to me the other day: "Any

favour in my power, I stand ready to grant you for the asking"?

Have I then reached the limit of my power to help? Is my own personal ability to give money or employment to the supplicant at my door, the measure of my duty?

In the pledge of one, whose opportunities to aid outstrip mine a thousand-fold, I have a lever of tremendous effectiveness to be worked to its limit.

Now carry that simple illustration up to a higher plane of thought.

How heavily has the life of one you tenderly love weighed upon your conscience! You have tried patiently to rescue him from sinful courses. You have argued with him on the grounds of reason and have appealed to the invitations and warnings of the Scripture. You have done more. You have watched over yourself, that you might set him such an example as should commend the religion of Jesus to his soul. Perhaps you feel that you have gone as far as it is possible to go. You have reached the full measure of your duty. Again I ask, "Are you sure of that?"

Are you not like him, who in his distress at discovering that his purse is empty, forgets that he has a balance in the bank? For it seems to escape your memory that Jesus Himself has made on your account a deposit that you cannot overdraw. "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He shall give it you."

Granted that such a promise means that prayer in Christ's name insures only the highest and best of blessings. Granted that God's love is not going to answer our petitions with gifts which would only harm ourselves or others. Yet unselfish seeking God's Holy Spirit for some other sinful soul, must

be among the highest and best of all that the heavenly treasury holds. The answer may be long delayed. "Shall not God," said the Saviour, "avenge His own elect, though He bear long with them?" Seven times did the prophet on the heights of Carmel send his servant to see if his persistent prayer for rain was answered. But only at the seventh time did the report come back: "There ariseth out of the sea a little cloud like a man's hand."

But says Jesus, "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint."

Beloved, we have not exhausted our resources in behalf of other souls, while intercessory prayer remains. Our duty is not done when we still have the power to move Omnipotence.

I cannot put out the fire in my neighbour's dwelling. But have I reached the end of my ability before I have sounded the alarm?

Abraham felt this duty tugging at his heart-strings. He was not able to drag his nephew Lot out of Sodom, nor to put out the fires of divine justice which were consuming the doomed city. But his duty was not discharged until he had climbed the heights that overlooked the burning town, and cried: "Oh, let not Jehovah be angry, and I will speak yet this once."

Moses and Aaron felt it when after the sin of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, "they fell upon their faces, and said: O God—the God of the spirits of all flesh—shall one man sin, and wilt thou be wroth with all this congregation?"

Samuel felt it when Israel had rejected Jehovah as their King. "God forbid," was his solemn appeal, "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you!"

To all these ancient men of God, this intercession was a duty of tremendous obligation.

That is not, however, its only aspect. St. Paul appreciated it as one of the most blessed privileges of the Christian.

I do not wonder that a foreigner, who has become by our liberal laws a naturalized citizen of the United States, never fails to exercise his new privilege of casting his ballot. In his own land he had no such right. He had never even aspired to it there. But in becoming an American, he enters upon a new life which confers on him a new privilege. He may be still poor and obscure as in the land of his nativity. But nevertheless his vote tells upon the Government, and he realizes the power and privilege it gives him.

Remember that these epistles to the early churches were "family-letters." St. Paul would not have exhorted unbelieving Jews or heathen idolaters to this exercise of the privilege of intercession. But the Christians to whom he wrote were naturalized citizens of the Kingdom of God. They were re-born, and with their new birth of the Spirit had come the priceless privilege of praying for others. It was their right of suffrage. For—and I speak it with all reverence—God gives to His children, in His promises to intercessory prayer, a vote that tells on the Government of the universe! For the Holy Spirit would never have led St. Paul to assign to intercession the place he gives it, "first of all," if that prayer were not a real power in the economy of the universe. I mean that God has given to this praying for others, by virtue of the precious blood shed on Calvary, a power in the spiritual world, like that of electricity, or gravitation in the world of Nature.

Perhaps the greatest defect of our average religion is the weakness of our faith in prayer as a power.

But when one realizes the promises of God to intercession, then it is like climbing out of the steaming valley thick with fog, up to the heights where God's free winds breathe health and vigour, and God's sunshine cheers the heart. It is like that, to let St. Paul's exhortation take hold upon our mind and conscience, "I exhort therefore, first of all, that prayers and intercessions be made for all men."

II. Observe How the Text Reveals the Boundless Scope of Intercessory Prayer

There are far loftier summits than that of Mount Washington. Yet, if you have ever stood upon its top in the crystalline clearness of a summer day, you have taken in a breadth of vision never to be forgotten. On such a height we stand in intercessory prayer. There is no snowy peak among the Alps, or towering summit of the Sierra, where we can see so much and so far, as on the mountain-top of intercession. For just as long as I pray only for myself, I may be very narrow in my outlook and limited in the range of my desires. Even when I think about other people, or speak of them, or write about them, I am as short-sighted as my own selfish ideas of their relation to myself. But when I pray for them, I can see away beyond all my own personal likes and dislikes, my own predilections and prejudices. I have left the mole-hill, and stand on Mount Washington.

Do you know that I think that one of the best of the many good features of our Prayer Book is, that every Sunday we pray for "the President of the

United States, and all in authority." We Americans are apt to be bitter partisans. The recent election-day was doubtless a day of anything but joy to some of the multitudes who crowded the city of Washington.

For when a tremendous overturn comes to the country, and all administrative and legislative power is given to new and inexperienced hands, I may feel that a bitter cup is put to my lips. My political affiliations prejudice me; and it is hard to be kindly disposed toward the new order of things in the nation. Do you suppose that St. Paul was specially in love with the administration of affairs under Felix, and Festus, and Herod Agrippa? Was the government of the Roman Empire, with Nero on the imperial throne, something which appealed to the Apostle's ideas of righteousness and justice?

But when I take up my Bible, and ask St. Paul whom I shall pray for, he answers: "For kings, and for all that are in authority." Somehow in prayer I get up where I can see away over the intercepting peaks of partisan feeling.

Look for a moment in another direction. There are a great many Christians—at least in name—with whom I cannot "see eye to eye." They have wandered far from what the New Testament calls "the simplicity which is in Christ." Some of them are, as it seems to me, entangled in errors ruinous to the soul. I have to cry out in protest, "O my soul, come thou not into their secret; unto their assembly be not thou united!" But were ever men farther apart religiously than the blinded Jews, who rejected Christ and His salvation, and the Apostle who "counted all things but loss for Christ"? But all the more, did he pray for their conversion. He even went to

an extreme that makes us shudder when he said: "I could wish myself accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."

And what shall I say of genuine Christians, whose methods, whose expressions, and ways of manifesting their love of the Saviour are all totally unlike my own? I cannot question their vital piety, nor cast a doubt upon the blessing with which the Holy Spirit has crowned their labours of love. But I find it hard to adopt their language, their plans of propagating the Gospel, and their modes of worship. I know that we shall meet in the glory of Heaven! but I cannot bring myself here on earth to "sit with them in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

Is it not true that we often narrow the scope of our Christian love and fellowship by prejudices like these?

But when we are on our knees before God, the Bible open before us, perhaps our eyes rest on words like these: "Praying always for all saints." Surely "all saints" is only another name for all true believers. Somehow there is nothing like intercession to make us see beyond the barriers that separate God's own dear children!

An iron curtain drops down to shut out our vision of the vast outlook of intercessory prayer.

"Surely," says some one, "I cannot be expected to include in the scope of my petitions the people who misrepresent my motives, who torture my words into meanings of which I never dreamed, and my actions into shapes that were totally foreign to my purpose. Their treatment of me is as much persecution as if I were bound to the rack, or chained amidst blazing faggots."

But Christ is leading you to the secret sanctuary

of your prayer; and as you kneel, He whispers in your ear: "Do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you."

O beloved, what mountain-top, which ever the foot of Man attained, ever spread out such breadth of vision as intercessory prayer?

Have you thought of it in the light of missionary effort? God knows as well as you, that you cannot reach with your witness for Christ all the souls who need a Saviour. You may not send missionaries to all of earth's teeming millions. Let the light of your example shine ever so brightly, its beams cannot penetrate the night brooding over souls which never saw you or heard your name.

But there is not a soul on earth whom you cannot touch in intercessory prayer! No sea it cannot cross! No mountain-range it cannot scale! No wilderness it cannot penetrate! It searches out the loneliest solitary! It finds him who threads his way through the crowds of mighty cities! And this power God puts into your hands and mine!

In a factory where a gigantic force was utilized to move its whirling wheels, they told me that the machinery was running at only half of its capacity. Have we been using a thousandth part of the power God has given us in intercessory prayer? Will we, from this hour, test its fullest energy?

II

A GREAT DISCOVERY

"And we have known and believed the love which God hath for us."
I John 4: 16.

THE Apostle John had made a great discovery. The text is not a cold announcement of a fact, like the formal document which an inventor files in the Patent Office. It sounds more like a shout of triumph, an outburst of joy. Into the street of ancient Syracuse, with bared head and flushed face, ran Archimedes, the philosopher, crying, "I have found it! I have found it!" His mind and temperament were not of the sort to be swept away by a flood-tide of excitement. No scientific man of our day, no Darwin or Sir John Lubbock, ever gloried more than Archimedes in being a calm and dispassionate observer of the phenomena of Nature. He reasoned, not by guesses or hypotheses, but by the acknowledged principles of mathematics. Yet he could not resist the enthusiasm of the moment in which he knew that he had wrung from the grasp of Nature a secret which she had kept for ages.

Is there not something like that in the spirit of this text? The Christian believers of that early day, for whom St. John was speaking, had discovered a truth which made their persecuted lives to overflow with a strange joy. "We have known and believed the love that God hath for us."

Now, to you and me the thought of God's loving

us is as old, as familiar, and in some cases as unappreciated, as a song heard in our childhood, and never wholly forgotten.

Not so with the Christians of the first century. How was it with the disciples reared in the Jewish faith? I once had the privilege of seeing Michael Angelo's masterpiece, the statue of Moses. Grimm, the biographer of the sculptor, says of that work, "Whoever has seen this statue must retain forever the impression it produces. There is in it a grandeur as if the thunder of heaven stood at the man's disposal."

To the ancient Jew Moses was the revealer of Jehovah. Like Michael Angelo they caught the impression of God's omnipotence, dignity, and righteous vengeance.

When the Old Testament revealed God's love for His chosen people, it meant to the Jew a love for the nation as a whole. The children of Abraham He loved, while He abhorred the Gentile nations of the earth. The idea that God yearned over the individual soul, and loved that one person with a never-failing tenderness, had no more place in the average Jew's conception of the divine Being, than gentleness and pity had in Michael Angelo's conception of Moses!

Can you not see what a new discovery must have been the Parable of the Prodigal Son or the picture of the Good Shepherd who leaves the ninety and nine of His flock to seek the one sheep that was lost?

Turn for a moment to the Christians of St. John's time, who had been converted from paganism. Do you know what was the idea of God which the heathen held under the Greek and Roman civiliza-

tion? Some horrible nightmare might suggest the answer. The gods were the scourges of mankind. The vultures preying on the vitals of Prometheus chained to a lonely rock—the Furies pursuing their victims with avenging whips—the curses resting on families from generation to generation—were the expression of the Divine Being as heathenism portrayed the Deity.

I. Let Us Look at the Nature of This Discovery. What Had These Early Believers Discovered?

In the spotted egg on which the mother-thrush is brooding, is a bird which by and by shall soar toward the roof of God's great temple, and sing its Te Deum. But first, the imprisoning shell must be broken off. So, if we would find the precise character of the discovery which St. John and his brother-disciples had found, we must get rid of some false notions which obscure its true meaning.

These early Christians had not made the discovery that God loved them, and was indifferent to other men. That was the precise notion of the typical Pharisee of our Saviour's time. But it was a very long way from being what flooded the early Church with a great gladness.

The probate of a will has sometimes made strange revelations. When a father has left to a favourite child everything life's labour had acquired and cuts off the rest of his household with a wretched pittance or complete disinheritance, it attracts wide notoriety. For it can only mean that one child absorbed the parent's love, and to the others his heart was cold as ice.

Do not dream that such was the discovery St.

John had made. True, the enemies of Christianity have so accused the Gospel. The indictment has been brought against evangelical religion that it pictures our Heavenly Father as loving the believer, and hating him who does not believe. Hear the words of Christ Himself, as He contradicts that blasphemous libel: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." How strongly is that echoed by St. Paul: "God commendeth His love toward us, that when we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

No; the difference between the true disciple and him who is not Christ's follower, is in the fact that while God's tender love is poured out upon both, the one shuts his eyes to it; and the other has "known and believed the love that God hath toward" him.

But do not make another mistake; the Christian's discovery is not finding out how much he loves God. The President and Congress of the United States are puzzled over the question: What class of immigrants ought to be excluded from our shores? The difficulty lies in discovering a test which shall unerringly determine who are Americans at heart and just where is the well-defined boundary between the anarchist and the loyal lover of liberty.

In the same way I ask, Is there any sure test whether you or I have become true disciples of the Lord Jesus? We are all the time picking up other people, as a bank teller picks up a suspected coin, and flinging them down upon the counter of our own religious opinions to see if they have the ring of the true metal. And sometimes we ourselves exhaust our religious chemistry to find an acid which, applied to the coin of our own personal religion,

will settle the question whether it is genuine or counterfeit. But whether the test be applied by ourselves or others, the most common one is: "How much do you, how much do I love God?"

But notice that that is not the test which St. John applies. He does not ask: "Do you know and believe the love which you have toward God?" But: "Do you know and believe the love that God hath toward you?"

I do not deny that self-examination may be a good thing. We ought to turn the microscope upon our own hearts, as the man of science does, to detect microbes and germs of disease. But the trouble is that unless God's Spirit had humbled us by a sight of our own sinfulness, we are pretty sure to overestimate the good that is in us, when we set ourselves to search our own hearts to find love toward God. It is like looking down into a deep, dark well, and measuring by the eye how much water is in it.

It is no unusual thing that rich men worry over their supposed poverty, and fear lest they come to a pauper's grave.

But in spiritual things the exact contrary is apt to be the case. The man who attempts to count up the sum of the love toward God treasured in his heart, invariably exaggerates the amount.

That is why this passage, and others I could quote, seem to turn our minds away from our love toward God to the unspeakable love of God to us. Why it should be so is clear as noonday. Christ did not come to a world which could have been saved without Him. He did not humble Himself to be born of woman, to bear thirty years of indifference, contempt, and hatred; nor did He agonize in the Garden and suffer on the Cross, when all the time there was

an easier way to lead men to love God. For, what do I need of a Saviour, if my heart is all aglow with love toward God? "God is Love." If I am full of love to Him, then I have the Divine Nature. Do not ask me to plead Christ's merits as the ground of my salvation! If my broken arm has some recuperative quality to heal itself, or if I can bandage it so skilfully that the fractured bone shall knit, what do I want of a surgeon?

On the Maine coast I saw a vessel fast grounded on a shoal. But an hour later there came to those stranded seamen a glad discovery. Not something which they found deep down in the hold of their ship. But the discovery that the rising tide of the great ocean was lifting them up in its arms. Something like that was the discovery which had come to St. John and those to whom he wrote. They had "known and believed" that they were lifted off the shoals of their own sin and guilt, not by any love of theirs toward God, but by the flood-tide of God's love to them!

II. What This Discovery Did for the Early Christians

Our old proverb, "Distance lends enchantment to the view," is as true in History as it is in Nature. We are apt to think of Apostolic believers as if they were as sinless as the angels. We forget that in that Church were a Judas, a Simon Magus, an Ananias and Sapphira. The men and women of that day were weak, sinful mortals like us. But there is one point in which those primitive disciples stand out in sharp contrast with twentieth-century Christians. They were poor. They were despised. They were

condemned to the living death of exposure to persecution and torture. But they were never sad-faced and gloomy Christians. The words "joy," "rejoice," "gladness" are scattered all over the Epistles of the New Testament, as stars are scattered over the Milky Way. Yet the writers of those ancient letters, and those to whom they were addressed, were all their lives like "sheep in the midst of wolves." No doubt that then as now, men differed in respect of native cheerfulness of temperament. Some inherit despondency. Some are born buoyant. We cannot suppose that by nature the Christians of that day were any different from ourselves. But the New Testament reveals them dwelling on the sunny slopes, rather than in the gloomy ravines of life. Why did they never set their songs to the music which sobs and wails through all the cadences of sorrow? The text is the answer to that question. The secret of joy was in the discovery they had made. They had "known and believed the love that God" had to them.

It warms my heart to find that some poor, humble, obscure man or woman has a real affection for me. But to know that He who holds Creation in the hollow of His hand is so moved by intense love to me—"even me"—that everything in that Creation is working together to bless me—surely that ought to flood with joy the deepest nook and corner of my soul!

You and I have the same God as St. John had. Jesus is ours, as He was his. But is our religion one of joy? If it be not, have we really made the "great discovery"? Have we "known and believed the love that God hath to us"?

But there is another point in the religion of St.

John's day, singularly in contrast with much that counts as the Christianity of to-day. They never lost sight of the manifestation of God's love in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

A student in our Art Institute stands before some masterpiece of Raphael or Guido, in hopeless despair. So we gaze upon the power of spiritual religion in the early Church. Like the Psalmist, we cry, "It is too wonderful for me. It is high: I cannot attain to it."

Yet why? What monopoly of spiritual power had the early disciples? But this is certain: the faith of Apostolic Christianity struck its roots down deep into this central truth, that God's love toward them had been proven in redeeming them through Him who "died, the Just for the unjust."

Just before my text the Apostle wrote: "God is Love." But he did not stop with that abstract proposition. He adds: "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love: not that we loved God; but that He loved us, and gave His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

O beloved, here is no vague and misty talking, such as we hear so much to-day, about the Fatherhood of God. It is the amazing proof of that Fatherhood, even toward rebellious and wandering sons and daughters. It was "the preaching of the Cross," which made Apostolic Christianity what it was. It was the substitution for it of rites and ceremonies, and the mediation a human priesthood between the sinner and his God, which, for a thousand years, plunged the Church into a dismal twilight that was neither night nor day. What was the Reformation

but restoring to its old supremacy the atoning work of Jesus? Never in these later days has modern Christianity experienced a new birth, and a resurrection of something like Apostolic spirituality, that it was not stamped with the prominence of the Cross of Jesus.

We may—yea, we shall—have it again, when we preachers shall subordinate all else to proclaiming as the highest manifestation of the love of God, the suffering of Christ for sinners. We shall have it again when hungry souls, conscious that they are not "right with God," shall cry out to every preacher: "Sir, we would see Jesus!"

Dr. John Watson, better known to most of us as Ian Maclaren, tells how a Scotch ship-captain, when his vessel was going to pieces on the wild Highland coast, gave out the life-belts to his crew, and saw them one after another swept ashore in safety. One life-belt was left for him. But as he girded himself with it, lo! up from some dark corner of the hold crept a stowaway, a street arab, who had secretly stolen passage. The captain took the life-belt from his waist and buckled it on the wretched little waif. The stowaway reached shore. The captain went down with his ship.

Ah! before, long before that great-hearted sacrifice was it written: "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

My brother, my sister, have you "known and believed" that He died for you?

III

THREE WINDOWS: A SERMON TO YOUNG PEOPLE

"The Dayspring from on high hath visited us." LUKE 1:78.

SOME of the young men and women before me are students in schools or colleges. Such young people will remember that a few years before the Christian Era, Horace, the laureate of the Court of Augustus, wrote, "A poet is born, not made." Horace died eight years before the words of this text were spoken. Even had he lived to that day, he would doubtless have had too profound a contempt for those whom he styled in his writings "the superstitious Jews," to believe that out of Judea was to come a born poet, and an immortal poem.

For my text is part of a song called the "Benedictus," or "Blessed," because its first line runs, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He hath visited and redeemed His people!" It is now two thousand years old. Yet we sang it in this church to-day. It enters into the worship of innumerable congregations. And while a few classical scholars read the poems of Horace, this song, which rang out its welcome to the coming Saviour, is familiar to the memory of millions.

Some of us who love the poems of Tennyson, cannot help wishing that he had dropped his pen before old age chilled his inspiration. Poetic fervour and kindling imagination belong to youth. They fail

with age, as the oil in a lamp long burning. But this poet of the advent of Christ was "a man well-stricken in years." For aught we know, the Benedictus was his only poem. Like the fabled song of the dying swan, it burst upon the world as the singer himself was bidding the world good-bye. Yet in every line there breathes the enthusiasm—there glows the fire of an immortal youth.

Before the eyes of the aged priest Zacharias the curtain of the future had been lifted. His newborn son was to be the herald of a new revelation to mankind. John Baptist was to rise as the morning star, to announce the coming of the Messiah. To the vision of the aged father was revealed the greatness of his son—than whom, so Christ Himself declared, none greater had been born of woman.

But far beyond mere parental pride does this Benedictus carry the aged poet. As one looking through a telescope finds himself in the very presence of objects far remote, so prophetic vision bears him on into the far-future. He sees Christ's ministry for the world, and the finished work of an atoning Saviour. The Cross, yet thirty years down the path of coming time, looms upon his vision. For the very heart of his song is that a way has been found for "the remission of sins, through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the Dayspring from on high hath visited us."

In Palestine there is no grey morning twilight—no flush of rosy dawn. Out of darkness, from behind the hills, the sun seems to leap into full splendour. The day "springs" suddenly into light that floods the earth. Such is the picture of the work of Christ, which Zacharias saw in prophetic vision. We see it in fulfilment, and actual experience.

Look! the sun is up! The air is glowing with its light. But dwellings there are where closed blinds forbid the light to enter. So shines Christ in this world. He floods our modern life with the glory of His Truth, "I came to give my life a ransom for many." Have you, young men and women, let that illumination in? There are three windows which I plead with you to open wide to-day.

I. The Window of Thought

Armed with the proper credentials, I one day tried to enter the gallery of the Senate Chamber in Washington; but found myself barred from that special door. I was courteously directed to another entrance.

So the Gospel of Christ is often met at the doorway of serious thought and consideration. The Lord Jesus seeks for admittance of His Light into the life and character; and the way which He seeks is always, first of all, that of the Mind.

As a great preacher has said, "The Scriptures stand almost alone as a book of religious directions, in exhorting to a constant use of our thinking powers."

The Old Testament is full of a pressing urgency to "consider," to "think," to "reason." "Oh; that my people would consider!" is God's longing expressed by Jeremiah.

Isaiah voices the Divine challenge, "Bring forth your strong reasons, saith the God of Jacob." "Come now, and let us reason together," saith the Lord.

The same principle is equally apparent in the New Testament. No statesman, when a measure of vast

moment to the country was just trembling in the balance of success or defeat, no advocate before the Supreme Court, ever marshalled in more splendid array, arguments appealing to the reasoning faculty, than did the Saviour in His debates with the Pharisees and Sadducees, than did St. Paul in the superb logic of the Epistle to the Romans.

Yet no fact of experience is more evident than this: that when Christ, the Light of the world, seeks to shine through the window of thought, He is forthwith directed elsewhere. It is said that the way for Christ to enter is through the window of the emotional, the æsthetic, the sentimental. Let me freely admit that never was there more discussion than in the twentieth century, of questions that involve Christianity directly or indirectly. We have an endless stream of articles in newspapers, reviews, and published volumes, upon Evolution, upon the so-called Higher Criticism, upon the social obligations of the Church. But when it comes to the question, "Does the average man or woman, and especially does the average young man or young woman, give the subject of his or her individual and personal relation to God intense thought, absorbing reflection, or even careful examination?"—the answer must be that never was there less of such application of the mind to the greatest problem ever proposed to an intelligent being than to-day. As Phillips Brooks once said, "There is a curious way of talking about Christianity, which patronizingly grants that there is a certain weak side of human nature, where Reason does not work, where everything depends upon sentiment and feeling, where not what is true, but what is beautiful and comforting, is the soul's demand, and that side of our Nature it gives over to religion."

We are informed that it is all very well for women and children to be religious. Men have to deal with affairs which demand thought. Which of you young people has not heard such talk? If I had it in my power to arrest even for this brief moment the close attention of you young men and women, there are one or two questions that I would like to press upon your searching consideration.

One is, " Has the human intellect ever expanded as since the first coming of Jesus Christ? Does the history of Egyptian letters, of Greek philosophy, or of Roman Law reveal any such power of pure intellect as the last nineteen hundred years has developed? Has the profound thinking of mankind during these past centuries been in pagan China, Buddhist India, Mohammedan Turkey, or in the United States and in other nations where Christ is known? " If it be objected that in China and Japan wonderful intellectual progress has of late taken the world by surprise, my answer is ready. That intellectual progress never appeared until the entrance of Christian Missions.

I would like to ask also if such great exponents of Christianity as Paul the Apostle, and Augustine, and Luther, and Calvin, and Jonathan Edwards, and John Wesley, and Bishop Butler were men who lived in a region of mere emotion and left their intellectual powers to wither of sheer neglect and disuse.

Once more, I would like to inquire if the topics which Christ's Gospel suggests to the mind are such as appeal to mere sentiment and imagination, or such as may well employ the highest intellectual gifts bestowed upon Mankind? Is the question whether there is a God or not, one to be wrestled with by a

feeble intellect? Or the question of His Providence in the affairs of men? Or that of the soul's future through the ages beyond the span of this life? Are Redemption and the Atonement and the New Birth of the Spirit, and a hundred other topics on which the New Testament dwells, so simple and rudimentary that they demand no special application of thought to grasp them?

Daniel Webster was not a model Christian. But he was confessedly a man of colossal intellect. When some one asked him what was the most imperative and important subject to which human thought could be devoted, he answered without a moment's hesitation: "My personal responsibility to God."

Oh, dear young friends, it is time for consideration, to give your best thinking to the claims of Jesus Christ. "The Dayspring from on high hath visited us." Let His light into your life by the window of thought.

II. The Window of Revelation

The longest and best ladder ever constructed helps no man to climb to the stars. There are limits to the power of the intellect, as absolute as the restriction of the tides of the sea: "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further."

I have pleaded with these young men and women to use their minds, to the full measure of their ability to think, on the subject of their personal relation to God. I have acted precisely the part of the officer who takes the first step toward the drill of his soldiers, by the order "Attention!"

If I can get them to apply to the subject of the

soul's salvation, anything like the share of thought they are bestowing upon matters of business, of pleasure, of social enjoyment, I shall feel that I have at least set them on the right road. But that is all. Indispensable as thinking is, it goes but a little way in Religion. The intellect is a tool which must be freely used if you are ever going to have any religion. But it is one of those imperfect tools which cannot go beyond the beginning of the work. The man was never born with mind so acute that he was able to think out a religion which could satisfy every need of his soul.

How do I know that? Because it was tried under the most favourable circumstances, and miserably failed! Take Egypt, with its colossal architecture, its literature, its science, its military organization, and its civil government: those old dwellers by the Nile "thought out" all that splendid civilization. But when they tried to think out a religion, it led them to the abject worship of the lowest forms of the brute creation.

Greek intellect "thought out" the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, the poetry of Homer, and the grace of the Apollo Belvidere. But in trying to think out a religion, it made its highest conception of the Deity that which embodied every gross appetite of sensual human nature.

Why adduce other illustrations? When thought has climbed its highest, there is still a height it never reaches. Unless God comes to its help with a revelation of Himself, it pitifully fails in its search for a true God and soul-satisfying peace with Him. I am not here to-day to prove that God *has* stretched out such a helping hand in the Bible; you can prove it for yourself, as millions have before you. How?

Just as one lost in the recesses of the Mammoth Cave, or the mazes of a Roman catacomb, would prove whether the starlike gleam in the distance is God's sunshine! By pushing toward it, by testing its source in following it up; but never by turning his back upon it or shutting his eyes to its proffered illumination. Hear what Christ Himself says: "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the Light of life."

Just before his death, Field-Marshal Lord Roberts advertised in the English papers for the gift to army-officers of field-glasses, and even opera-glasses. The response to the great warrior's appeal was only measured by the thousands. But what a confession it was that the eye unaided could not discern what an officer in battle must see!

Oh, ye young recruits, on the verge of Life's fierce battle, there are two great truths that it is imperative that you shall see: your own sinfulness and condemnation, and the fulness of pardon and salvation in the precious blood of Christ! Neither of them can your unaided reason reveal. I plead with you to accept the help God gives in the Revelation of His Word!

III. Lastly: the Window of Personal Trust in Christ

Let none who hear me say: "Our minister forgets that he began by urging that we give our powers of intellect to the great questions of religion. Now he would have Reason abdicate her throne. He would have a blind unreasoning faith usurp the seat of Thought."

Let us be clear as to the central point of faith in

Jesus Christ. What is it? In what relation does it stand to the thinking mind and to the revelation God makes in the Bible? To myself I seem to-day like the man who flags an express-train at a way station. I have flung out the red signal which calls for attention and a halt. My message was to stop and think. But I took a second step. I gave you the despatch of God's Revelation, and asked you to ponder its instructions. Surely there is yet another step. Not for me to take. But for the young man or woman who is at once the engineer and the conductor of his or her own destiny for time and eternity. Have you trusted yourself to your orders? What can be the reason that in this congregation are men and women who have given thought to the one all-important question, who have opened the long-closed window of Revelation, and given the Bible study, yet have not peace of conscience, and live in a twilight of doubt?

Because neither intellectual application nor the Bible itself are more than means to an end. That end is to find in the Bible a Saviour who died "to give remission of sins through the tender mercy of our God." It is to step with my whole weight of sins upon this one bridge: "He died; the Just for the unjust." The soul that lets in "the Dayspring from on high" through the window of such self-surrendering trust in Christ, has passed from darkness to light.

A moment more, and yonder doorway will be crowded, as you turn your backs upon this place where Christ has been to meet you. Ten thousand things will claim you attention. Business presses. Society is at its flood-tide. Holiday festivities are engrossing. May God's Spirit grave in this closing

moment upon our memories something ineffaceable "lest we forget."

Thomas Chalmers, that giant of Scottish Christians, in the earlier years of his ministry gave himself with all-absorbing interest to the science of astronomy and the mathematical studies which it involved. Later in his career he said: "What is the object of mathematical science? Magnitude and the proportions of magnitude. But in those days I had forgotten two magnitudes. I thought not of the littleness of Time. I recklessly thought not of the greatness of Eternity."

IV

"PUT THAT ON MY ACCOUNT"

"If he hath wronged thee at all, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account." PHILEMON 18.

THE letter of the Apostle Paul to his friend Philemon is one of the very shortest of the books of the New Testament.

Philemon appears to have been a citizen of wealth and dignified position in the Asiatic city of Colossae. That he was a Christian, and held a conspicuous place in the Colossian Church, is evident from Paul's own language, for the Apostle claims him as one converted through the instrumentality of his Gospel. He writes: "Thou owest to me even thine own self besides." Paul was not the founder of the Church at Colossae, for in his letter to that far-off Christian community, he speaks of the Colossian disciples as among those who had "not seen his face in the flesh." But men like Philemon travelled in those days, as in ours; and somewhere he must have fallen in with the Apostle to the Gentiles, and at his lips had heard the story of the Cross, and accepted Jesus as his Saviour.

Shut up though Paul was at this period of his history, in Nero's prison at Rome, yet no tyrant could check the outflow of his tender love to those who belonged to Christ in the remotest regions of the empire. From his cell in the prison he writes two letters to distant Colossae.

One is the well-known Epistle to the Colossians. The other is this letter to Philemon, a tender, gentle, affectionate, private communication to a beloved and intimate friend. They were sent by the hand of Epaphras, apparently the pastor of the Colossian Church, who had journeyed over land and sea, to bring the greetings of his congregation to the aged "prisoner of the Lord," at Rome.

But with Epaphras went another, who bore this special Epistle to Philemon. By name Onesimus, he was in plain words "a runaway slave." Worse, far worse than that; it seems clear that in escaping from the house and service of Philemon, Onesimus had shown himself a thief. He had carried away with him property belonging to his master.

All the pagan literature of that day reveals the city of Rome as a cesspool into which were drawn the foulest dregs of the empire. To one like Onesimus it offered irresistible attractions. In its enormous population he could lose himself in the crowd beyond all likelihood of recognition. In the slums of the great city he was sure of finding congenial associations and the gross pleasures on which his stolen money could be spent.

So far, we can easily trace the career of this miserable being. The letter to Philemon reveals to us a criminal and base betrayer of his master's kindness and confidence, entering the purlieus of Rome, as thousands of such have flocked into our great cities in this winter past.

But there, a fog impenetrable drifts over the path of Onesimus. How he came into the knowledge of Paul, or what circumstances led to his conversion, is not even hinted at in the New Testament. We may guess that, as was natural to such a malefactor, he

had been arrested, cast into prison, and there in some way fell under the influence of his fellow-captive, the Apostle. But this is mere conjecture. All that we really know is, that under the power of God's Spirit blessing the Gospel which fell from the lips of the great preacher, Onesimus was converted with a transformation as complete as that of Paul himself.

In prison he becomes the Apostle's companion and devoted friend. To use the precise language of the Epistle to Philemon, Onesimus is Paul's "brother beloved."

In our text we come face to face with this runaway slave, as he is about to go back to Colossae to give himself up to his master, and accept at Philemon's hand the penalty deserved. But the tender heart of Paul cannot bear that Philemon should not know the genuineness and reality of his slave's conversion. So he writes this letter, to soften the master's heart, and to move his conscience.

I. We Have Here a Plea Based upon the Wonders of God's Special Providence

Chicago has been stirred to its depths of late by robberies unparalleled in boldness and audacity. I wish that I could rouse equal excitement over a theft to which Christians seem to submit as tamely as an abject slave to the lash of his master. I mean the stealing from us of that trust in the loving Providence of our Heavenly Father, which is the secret of all-abiding peace and joy. For it is a sad fact that many "who profess and call themselves Christians," are like the ring from which the precious stone has dropped out. They have lost out of their religion the

real jewel of this truth: that everything in the life of the true disciple is part of a plan which God conceived, and over which He exercises a watchful care, like that of the weaver over every thread of the fabric his loom is producing.

Amidst Life's trials, cares, and anxieties, and the sorrows which a pastor knows in carrying the burdens of others, I could not live—I would not want to live—if I did not cast anchor on this sure hold: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God."

See how St. Paul brought out that wonderful truth in the text: "For perhaps he was therefore parted from thee for a season, that thou shouldst have him forever, no longer as a slave, but as a brother beloved."

Clearly the loss of Onesimus had been a heavy one for Philemon. It is quite possible, as we see this subject in the light of the history of those days, that Onesimus had gained a place of great trust in the service and household of Philemon. He may have held the purse-strings of his master's wealth, and, as with Joseph, there may have been nothing done in that Oriental household at Colossae, except as he gave the word. However that may be, we know that Onesimus proved unworthy of such confidence, and unfaithful to his master. He had fled from Colossae; but only when he had robbed Philemon, and displayed the basest side of human nature.

Put yourself for a moment in that master's place!

I venture to believe that Philemon could see no good whatever in that episode of his life. Was he not a Christian? Had he not been faithful to his Lord? Why then should he be chosen out to be the sufferer from this treachery and theft? He had kept

his lamp of faith in God burning brightly in a city where the vast majority of his neighbours were idolaters, heathen. And perhaps he cried out with the Psalmist: "O God, let Thy wrath fall upon the heathen, and upon those who have not called upon Thy name!" You and I have often felt that way when some inexplicable calamity has fallen to our lot.

Now listen! How superb is the faith in God's providence with which St. Paul meets this childish petulancy which we so frequently exhibit!

He says to Philemon, "Can you not see that in the flight of your runaway slave God was at work to accomplish a loving purpose that reaches on and on into Eternity? God cares for the soul of the meanest slave. His hand was overruling the dishonesty of Onesimus to lead him where he was laid hold of by the Holy Spirit, where the Gospel reached his conscience and his heart, and where God saved him forever by the blood of Jesus. But God cares for the master as well as the slave. He gives back to Philemon better than He took away. The fugitive slave is on his way to Colossae, and to his master's house, not by compulsion, but of his own free choice.

But he returns, no longer a worthless traitor, an ungrateful thief, but a consecrated child of God, penitent, and seeking from his earthly master the pardon which already fills his soul with peace through the blood of Jesus! But Paul does not stop there. He tells Philemon that Onesimus goes back to Colossae in a new relation to his master.

True; in the eyes of the Roman law, he is still a slave. But to Philemon he is henceforth a beloved brother in the household of Christ. He is no longer Philemon's until death shall sever the tie which binds

them together, but for all the eternal ages in which they together shall praise "Him who sitteth upon the Throne!"

O beloved, there is no peace which circumstances will not disturb, annoyances ruffle, and trials embitter, except in that implicit faith which lays hold upon the truth that nothing "happens" to the Christian! There are no happenings, no chances, no isolated events in your life or mine. They are all links in the chain which God is forging in the fires of His quenchless love. Each one is a part of a scheme of blessing into which the great Artificer is working the most insignificant items of our daily experience.

Do you remember an incident which, only a few months ago, I used as an illustration of childlike faith in God? Somewhere on one of our great railway lines, the track-repairers found the nest of a ground-sparrow in a cavity underneath the steel rail over which, day and night, there thundered a hundred trains!

There, in that safe retreat, no quivering of the earth, and no roar of the iron wheels could frighten the mother-bird, or harm her callow brood.

Beloved, if we who "name the name of Christ," could only thus trust to His everlasting love, what a different life would be ours! How the great, sinful, and unhappy world around us would be drawn to Christ's Kingdom, by the consciousness that we had something which they had not!

II. Notice the Self-Sacrifice of Paul

I presume that most of us would be willing to speak a good word for such an offender as Onesimus, provided that, like the Apostle, we were abso-

lutely sure that the man's character had been completely changed. I myself have more than once pleaded for the reinstatement of one who had wronged his employers.

But how many of us would be ready to go a step further, and offer to make good the money-loss which the employer had sustained?

I read in one of our daily papers, that no lawsuit would be pressed against the bondsman for a certain defaulting bank-official. Though the criminal had betrayed his trust, wrecked the bank, and fled to another country, as Onesimus to Rome, the man who signed his bond was not sued at law. Why? Because voluntarily he had come forward, and, without reserve, had put into the hands of the directors every item of property he had in the world. Naturally we say that it was a noble and honourable thing to do.

But it lessens our admiration, perhaps, of such self-sacrificing fidelity, to know that the bondsman was the father of the defaulter. He was nearest of kin, and the sharer of the blood of the fugitive.

But oh! what a gulf of social difference yawned between St. Paul and Onesimus! On the one side was a scholar, a learned teacher of the Mosaic Law, the head of the missionary work of the Apostolic Church, a free-born citizen of the Roman Empire!

On the other was a wretched slave, and self-convicted thief! What claim had such scum of the earth upon a man like Paul the Apostle?

Yet when Paul is writing to Philemon, pleading that he will forgive Onesimus, and will take him back as though he had never wronged his master, he does not let his pen drop from his hand until he has written something else. Listen to it! "If he has wronged

thee, and owes thee aught, put that on my account! I Paul write it with mine own hand, I will repay it."

No bond ever drawn with legal skill and formal phraseology, was ever more binding than this pledge by which the Apostle took upon himself the burden of making restitution for the money which a thieving slave had stolen!

"With mine own hand I write it," says Paul; "I will repay it."

Every student of the New Testament knows that St. Paul rarely wrote his letters with his own hand. Just as you business men dictate to a stenographer, so did he to an amanuensis. We even have the name of this secretary in the close of the Epistle to the Romans, where, amidst the loving messages which the Apostle sends to his fellow Christians in Rome, this greeting is inserted: "I Tertius, who wrote this Epistle, salute you."

But remember that in the case of the letter to Philemon, it was written in prison. The Apostle's hands were, in all probability, manacled.

But when he comes to this making himself responsible for the amount stolen by Onesimus, he cannot do it by proxy. He manages to get the pen into his own fettered grasp sufficiently to write the solemn pledge and sign his name to the bond: "I Paul write it with my own hand. I will repay it."

He is determined to have it clearly understood that every farthing which Onesimus owed Philemon is to be put on Paul's "account."

There is something wonderful in such Christian, yes, such Christlike love as that!

Do you know what lay behind it? Ah! Paul was looking back into his own past. He recognized the hour when, though stricken with blindness of out-

ward sight, to his inward vision he was revealed as "the chief of sinners."

Like a grim prosecutor, Conscience read to him his terrible indictment. "You hated your Saviour; you fought against the very Messiah whom you, as a Jew, professed to look for."

But out of that same awful Past, loomed up before Paul's eyes the Cross of Calvary. And from Him, who hung upon it, came a voice: "Put that on My account."

But relentless Conscience is not silenced yet. "You persecuted the Church of God. You dragged men and women to prison, and when they were put to death, you gave your testimony against them."

But again from the Cross, One nailed to it speaks: "Put that on my account."

But, Paul, listen again to Conscience! "You held the clothes of them that stoned God's first martyr—Stephen. You were of them whose fury was unchecked when they heard his dying prayer, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!'" But once more, from the Cross, is heard that gentle voice: "Put that on my account!"

Was Paul solitary in that experience? Was he the only sinner to whose memory rose the vision of one who took our burden of guilt and condemnation on Himself?

O ye dying men and women! what hope for eternity could you and I have; or what boldness to face the judgment; did not the Voice plead from the central Cross: "Put that on my account"?

V

HOW SHALL WE BE READY FOR CHRIST'S COMING?

"But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins."

I PETER 4:7, 8.

TALKING one day with a Christian man, I happened to mention a distinguished minister of my acquaintance.

The expression of my friend's face changed to one of contempt, and his voice assumed a tone of scorn, as he said: "But he is a Second Adventist!"

The language and manner were characteristic of much religious thought and attitude in our time.

I have read that in England a little group, composed of a few hundreds at the most, are still looking for some scion of the House of Stuart to appear and claim the throne of Britain. Little wonder if no one takes them seriously. The police do not interfere with them, and the courts do not try them for high treason. Not one of them is flung into prison.

But the world laughs at them as a set of fanatics who are indulging in a dream from which they need to be awakened.

There can be no question that something such is the disposition and trend of thought on the part of the world toward those who are really looking for the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. But not

on the part of the outside world only. Many in the Church are influenced by the same feeling.

It is said that flowers of the lily-family can be made to take various colours if certain chemicals are infused into the soil in which the bulbs are planted. The Church of Christ ought not to be *of* the world. But it is *in* the world. It thrusts its roots into the soil of human society. Necessarily it comes to be affected by that which colours the opinions of the world.

If one of the angels who do the errands of the Almighty were to visit the Church on earth, he would meet with no more amazing spectacle than the obvious fact that the second advent of our Lord is ignored, sometimes even ridiculed by the very people to whom Christ Himself gave the command: "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh."

Does that event enter as a factor into the lives of Christians? Does the ministry make it prominent? Have you ever heard much upon the subject outside of this pulpit? And when one of your pastors has dwelt upon it with the recurrence of this Advent Season of our Church, has not the comment been made: "Is he, too, one of those Second Adventists?" Has it ever occurred to you that that term is an exact description of every writer of the New Testament? Examine the whole list! The name "Second Adventist" applies to every one of the men who wrote the four Gospels. So it does to the author of the Acts. The prominence of that truth appears in the Epistles of St. Paul. It tinges the letters of St. John, St. James, and St. Jude. But, if any one of those, whom the Holy Ghost inspired to give the New Testament to mankind, stands forth pre-eminent in

keeping this thought ever in the minds and memories of those who should afterward read his message, that man was the Apostle Peter. Both of the two letters which he left as a precious legacy to God's people, are super-saturated with the truth of the second coming of our Lord.

I. Ought We of the Twentieth Century to Be Looking for Our Lord's Second Coming?

When you sailed from New York to Liverpool on a trans-Atlantic liner, you noticed some striking changes on board, as your ship drew near to the end of the voyage. The lookouts were doubled. The captain was constantly on the bridge with his marine-glass at his eye. Passengers crowded forward; each eager to be first to discern whether the blue haze on the horizon is really the bold headland which western Ireland thrusts out into the Atlantic.

Now, one thing is sure. Whether the event, which the New Testament is continually pointing out, is almost upon us, or is yet far distant, it is certain that you and I are twenty centuries nearer to that day than were the writers of the New Testament.

Yet here appears the strangest contradiction of human history: that the very consummation for which the early Christians watched "as they that watch for the morning," we are suffering to fall into oblivion.

For us Episcopalians there is far less excuse than for our brethren of the non-liturgical churches. If we hide the thought of the second advent in some dark corner of our religion, we are like him who sleeps on with his alarm-clock persistently ringing out its warning. For, on every occasion of public worship we repeat the solemn article of the Apostles'

Creed: "From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead."

Nor only so: every year our prescribed worship brings us to an Advent season, when every Collect, Epistle, and Gospel, sounds out the reminder of the second coming of the Lord, as if it would not permit us to sleep the slumber of indifference!

Is not the ideal Christian of the New Testament one who commits himself to the plighted word of Christ? Has He not covenanted and agreed with His people on earth that He will come a second time to this world?

In the year 1414 John Huss, the Bohemian reformer, against the warnings of his friends, went up to the Council of Constance, knowing that monk and bishop, priest and pope, were thirsting for his blood. Had he not the safe-conduct of the Emperor Sigismund? Surely, the word of the greatest monarch of Europe would not be lightly broken!

It was magnificent faith. But it was trust in the word of one who lacked either the will or the power to keep his promise; and John Huss was burned at the stake.

Now either such faith in the word of the Lord Jesus will never be disappointed, or else the whole fabric of Christianity tumbles into ruin!

Our religion centres in taking Christ at His word.

It is the basis of our pardon. It is the ground of our hope. It is our support in trouble, our light in the dark valley, our victory over the Last Enemy, our title-deed to life eternal!

The whole weight of human salvation hangs upon this question: "Is the word of Christ to be implicitly trusted?" But why should we trust His word in other matters and hesitate to commit ourselves to His

repeated pledge that He is surely to come again? Listen! "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also."

Again: "For the Son of Man shall come again in the glory of His Father with the angels, and shall reward every man according to his works."

Again: "Ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

I might multiply these testimonies which fell from the lips of Him who is the faithful and true witness.

But I press this point. Can any Christian, conscious that the whole fabric of salvation crumbles into ruin, if Christ's promises be not trustworthy, treat these pledges that He is coming a second time, as though He had never uttered them?

II. Why Has the Fact, so Impressively Foretold by Christ Himself, Lost in Our Day the Hold Which It Had upon the Early Church?

I think that perhaps the most potent source of such indifference to a truth which Christ constantly brought to the front, is in the fact that He declared that it was to be expected speedily. Peter in this text was only echoing the teaching of his Master, when he wrote: "The end of all things is at hand."

"Behold," said Christ to St. John in that closing revelation of Himself, "Behold; I come quickly." And He repeats it five times in that last book.

But more than nineteen centuries have passed, and yet this pledge is unfulfilled. Is the word of Christ, after all, not to be trusted? Was Peter indulging in guesswork?

These are pertinent questions, and it behooves us to answer them only in the light of careful searching of the Scriptures.

Some have hastily swept away all difficulties by the assertion, that our Lord's prophetic declaration that He should come again, was fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem. That frightful cataclysm did come speedily. Within forty years of the Crucifixion the Romans had desolated Jerusalem and carried its people into captivity. To the Pharisee and Sadducee, to the priest and Scribe, it must have seemed a coming of Christ to avenge Himself on those who crucified Him. To the average Jew it was "the end of all things."

Such interpreters point out that Christ certainly foretold the destruction of Jerusalem in the 24th and 25th chapters of St. Matthew's Gospel. He describes its horrors in connection with His coming again, and in such a way that these teachers insist that the two events are one and the same.

But the careful student of the New Testament cannot accept such a conclusion. No doubt Christ spoke of the day when Jerusalem and the Temple should be left "without one stone upon another," and of that supreme hour when He should return to earth, in such connection that it becomes easy to confuse the two. But evidently He employed the one as a type, an emblem, an illustration of the other.

If I would convey to you a vivid idea of what the Deluge might have been, it would be natural to portray the bursting of the levees of the Mississippi, desolating the lower valley of the great river. When the conflagration of 1871 swept Chicago, it suggested to many minds the destruction which both the Bible

and Science predict as the ultimate destiny of the earth. So did the Saviour make the siege and desolation of the Holy City a type of the last great day of His appearing. He had His own reasons, which I do not presume to fathom, for so picturing both, that it becomes hard to decide where the illustration ends, and the reality begins.

When I first saw the cyclorama of the Battle of Gettysburg, I noticed features, not a part of the painting, but tangible objects so placed as to add to the realistic quality of the scene. But it was not easy to say which was a disabled cannon, or an ammunition-wagon with broken wheels; and which was only canvas and paint. Precisely so it is in that great tableau which Christ displayed to His disciples just at the close of His earthly ministry. It is unquestionably difficult to disentangle the two threads which are woven into the vast tapestry of His prophecy. But we have no more right, because it may be difficult to separate the destruction of Jerusalem from the second advent of the Lord, to eliminate that coming consummation of all history, than we have to reject all mathematical education because it is harder than simple addition. I take a sheet of paper, and tear it asunder. But the two edges fit with absolute nicety. The saw-tooth projections of the one exactly correspond to the recessions of the other. So fits every true prophecy into its fulfilment. But it is impossible to make the overthrow of Jerusalem, which took place more than eighteen hundred years ago, meet every requirement described in our Lord's predictions of His second coming.

Did the long siege of Jerusalem, when Titus beleaguered the city for six months, fulfil the prediction that Christ's coming should be with the suddenness of

the lightning? When Jerusalem fell, did the Son of Man come "in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory"? Did He come, in that Roman conquest, attended by an innumerable "company of angels"? Did He then send forth and "gather" His chosen "from the ends of the earth"? Did that overthrow of the city and the Temple fulfil in any adequate way the hour in which "every eye should see the Son of Man, and they that pierced Him should look upon Him"?

But why then did both Jesus and His apostles speak of His second coming, as "even at the doors," or as Peter expresses it in the text, "at hand," when after nineteen hundred years it has not yet come to pass? Simply because what may be expected at any moment is always "at hand"?

On shipboard I asked an officer when we might look for the sight of land. If his answer was, "Not before noon," I might have let the morning drift away unheeded. But when the noon-bell had struck, I looked for the headland to loom out of the mist at any moment.

Beloved, we passed the noon hour when the Holy Ghost was poured out upon the Church of Christ. Then we entered on the period which the writers of the New Testament call "these last days." In this period Christ comes.

When with the December cold the frost clamps fetters on the Straits of Mackinac, no sailor is in expectancy that at any time the ice-barrier will break. He has not entered into the period when it is to be looked for. But when April comes, the sailors on these "unsalted seas" are all expectation. They listen for the click of the telegraph. They scan the newspapers. They make ready their vessels. The

whole fleet is waiting for an hour which may strike at any moment.

That is the way the early Church felt about Christ's second advent. They had entered the period when it was to be expected. The "last days" had begun. You and I, nineteen hundred years further along than they, are surely where Christ is to be looked for if His word is to be trusted.

III. In Conclusion, Notice the Way in Which Christians of Peter's Day Prepared for the Second Coming of the Lord

Such an expectation has led some souls to feel that they must give up all their ordinary duties to watch for the tokens of the Advent. Others have imagined that they must prepare by doing some heroic act of self-sacrifice for Christ.

In my childhood, in what was called the "Millerite" excitement, I knew people who put on "ascension-robes," and turning from all usual duties, climbed to hill-tops, or roofs of houses, to wait for the Lord to come.

Long after St. Peter wrote the text, but still while Christianity was young, the writers of Church history tell us that there were disciples who sought death by martyrdom as the one way to be ready for the coming of the Master.

But what says St. Peter? "The end of all things is at hand." Well; what then? "Therefore be sober." But surely, sobriety is an everyday duty whether Christ be near or far away.

Therefore, "watch unto prayer." But even if Christ's coming were a million of years distant, ought I not to "watch and pray"? Therefore, "have fer-

vent charity among yourselves." But is not charity —love for the brethren—something without which I cannot be a Christian, no matter how near or how far be the coming of the Lord?

Does it not teach that the true way to be ready for what St. Peter calls "the end of all things," is to be doing the everyday duties which belong to a loving and trusting child of God?

Were you to cross the seas, and leave your house to servants, with the warning that at any day or hour you would suddenly return, what would be the best way for them to be ready for your coming? To keep ever at work at the tasks which you had set them? Or to leave the house to dust and disorder, and disrepair, while they stand staring from the windows watching the road by which they look for you to come?

More than once in my pastoral visits I have found some good woman, busied with her household cares, apologizing for her appearance in her workday attire. But to such I have said, as I say it now: "When the Chief Shepherd shall appear, I would have Him find me at the work He has given me to do."

VI

WHY THE SON OF GOD BECAME THE SON OF MAN

"He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." MATTHEW 16: 15, 16.

WHY should He care what people thought or said about Him? There are and always have been men whose sails were trimmed to catch the shifting winds of popular favour.

"What do men say about us" is the pole-star which guides their voyage, the mould into which they run their plastic ideas, and the flowing stream on which they launch their lives. More devoutly than they believe the Bible, do some men believe that ancient lie, "The voice of the people is the voice of God." Alike in politics and religion: as the captain of a vessel in port waits till the tide shall turn before he crosses the bar, so do such men watch and wait for the flood-tide of public sentiment.

It were blasphemy to count Christ as belonging to this class. Did He not warn His disciples, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you."

So I come back to the inquiry: What did Jesus care whether men said that He was John Baptist, or Elijah, or Jeremiah, or one of the prophets? What difference would it have made with Him, if the answer had been that of the Pharisees: "He hath a devil, and is mad"?

The explanation seems to me to lie along this line: Jesus was about to draw out, not for His own sake but for that of His disciples, the sublime confession which a moment later fell from Peter's lips, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!" Such a confession demanded courage. Like the explosion of artillery evoking rain from the clouds, so bold an utterance might well call down upon Jesus and His followers a thunderstorm of persecution. Yet, doubtless, the Saviour sought it from Peter's ever-ready tongue, for the very reason that honest confession is a source of spiritual strength. All the Twelve would be fortified when their spokesman, Peter, dared to voice what they thought about their Master.

But may not Jesus have had a valid reason for prefacing His question, "Who say ye that I am?" by first asking what was the opinion of men outside? The dark background, which is a characteristic of Rembrandt's portraits, serves to bring out by contrast every feature and expression of the face.

So did the prevailing opinions of Jew and Gentile about the Saviour form a background, against which, in startling contrast, stood out the portrait which Peter's confession painted. Some said: "Thou art John the Baptist." But John, holy and great as he was, was yet only an erring mortal.

Some said Elijah. Yet Elijah was but a man. Some said "Jeremiah or one of the prophets." But from first to last of "the goodly fellowship of the prophets," they were but flesh and blood.

And so, upon that canvas dark with the weaknesses of human nature, all the brighter shone the transcendent glory of Peter's portrait of Jesus: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

I. Let Us Ask What Was Involved in the Assertion that Jesus of Nazareth Was the Son of God

Of late years the cry has risen from our congested cities, "Back to Nature!" "Back to the soil!" The effort has been made to induce men to return to the occupation that God gave to Adam—the tilling of the ground.

In much the same way there has rung through the ranks of the Christian host, the persistent call, "Back to Christ!" If that signifies that we should get into a closer intimacy of personal relation to the Saviour in communion with Him, and that we take Him as the pattern of our lives, it ought to call forth our heartfelt "Amen."

But with some who use this expression, the thought conveyed is that the four Gospels are more trustworthy than the teachings of those from whose pens came the Acts and the Epistles. To such a notion let us "not give place; no, not for an hour!" For Jesus Himself, as He was about to ascend to His Father's right hand, gave His solemn pledge that He would send the Holy Ghost upon His Apostles; for what? To give them some partial and imperfect illumination in spiritual things, but inferior to what He personally taught, as the moonlight is pale compared with the sun? Far from it! He gave His word that when the Holy Spirit should come upon them, "He should guide them into all truth." In that night in which He was betrayed, He told them that there were great truths which they were as yet no more able to bear than the eyes, from which a film has just been removed, are able to endure the glory of the sun at noon. But it was those truths

which the Holy Spirit was going to impart to them in all their fulness. Christ set His seal of attestation to what, under that Pentecostal illumination, they should hand down to the Church of Christ for all the ages.

Yet while we unhesitatingly refuse to put the four Gospels on a different and higher plane of authority than the rest of the New Testament, I am going to deal this morning only with the recorded words of Christ Himself.

Gushing as water from its fountain, there escaped from the lips of Peter the tremendous claim for his Master: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Has the question ever come to your mind, "Who, of all mere human beings, was the best, holiest, and most Godlike man, that ever appeared in History?" I do not know. But I do know that, if to such a good man these words had been addressed, he would have been overwhelmed with horror at their blasphemy.

But does Jesus start back appalled at the rash utterance of Peter? Does He wither the very soul of His impetuous disciple with terrible rebuke?

Why! So far from such a reception of that confession, He accepts the title with all that it implies. Nor does He stop there. He blesses Peter with a glowing benediction, and declares that this revelation of who and what Jesus Christ is, has come to Peter direct from Almighty God. "Blessed art thou, Simon, son of Jonah; for flesh and blood have not revealed it unto thee; but my Father in heaven."

"Son of the living God!" What does that more than imperial title involve?

I could easily exhaust the time allotted to this ser-

mon by answering the question with quotations from the Acts and the Epistles. I could point out to you how, under the inspiration of the Spirit of Truth, the writers of the New Testament distinctly tell us that He was "God manifest in the flesh," "God over all, blessed forever," "In Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," "He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." But I refrain. For the argument's sake only, I turn to Jesus Himself. I appeal to His own words. What did He say that His Sonship to the living God involved?

Listen! He is facing His cavilling enemies, when He had just wrought the miracle of restoring the paralytic at the Pool of Bethesda. Hear Him! "The Father hath committed all judgment to the Son." Why? "That," adds Jesus, "all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." Surely, the Lord was anticipating what Paul wrote to the Philippian Church: "He thought it no robbery to be equal with God."

In one of His pathetic talks with His disciples on the eve of His crucifixion, He finds Philip blindly groping for the light. "Lord," he cries, "show us the Father, and it suffices us." Hear Christ's answer! What possible meaning could it have except that He was a sharer of the Deity of the Father? "Philip, hast thou been so long time with me, and yet hast thou not known me? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

You all know, in its many reproductions, Guido Reni's great painting of the Aurora. It adorns the ceiling of one of the rooms of the Rospigliosi Palace in Rome. But the visitor need not gaze upward to see the picture. A great mirror upon a table underneath reveals every feature reflected in its surface.

So does our Lord declare that we can see the invisible God in the person of His Son.

Again, when Moses at the Burning Bush asked by what name he should speak of the God of Israel, the answer was: "Say unto them that 'I am' hath sent you unto them." In the same Hebrew letters that spell "I am," is the word "Jehovah." It expresses the idea of a self-existent Being uncreated from all eternity.

Do you remember that one day in Jerusalem, Jesus, in talking to the Jews, spoke reverently of Abraham; yet as one might speak of his friend? Scornfully the Jews protested: "Thou art not yet fifty years old; and hast thou seen Abraham?" How did Jesus reply? It would have been a strong assertion of His pre-existence long before His birth at Bethlehem, if He said: "Before Abraham was, I was." But His reply was infinitely stronger. It was a claim that He shared the uncreated and self-existent being of the Almighty, when He deliberately applied to Himself the very name by which God had made Himself known to Moses: "Before Abraham was, I am."

O beloved, on this Trinity Sunday we stand, where the old Lawgiver stood at the Burning Bush, "on holy ground." Never have we more need of reverence and awe, than when we come face to face with Christ's own claim to be what the Epistle to the Hebrews calls "the express image of the Father's person." When Queen Victoria, little more than a girl, had just ascended the throne of England, she was present at a rendering of the oratorio of the "Messiah." Royal etiquette decreed that the sovereign should retain her seat throughout the performance. But when "like the sound of many waters" there burst upon her ear the chorus, "Hal-

lelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!" the young queen rose to her feet, and bowed her head, as if she would take off her own crown, and cast it down before the throne of Jesus. May such reverence be ours to-day.

II. Shall We Turn Back for a Moment, to the Opening of This Wonderful Passage, and Find There Another Title, Which Jesus Gave Himself?

That which led to the conversation recorded in the text was our Lord's question: "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"

If you carefully study the four Gospels, you will discover that no less than fifty times does Christ call Himself by the name, "the Son of Man."

Surely there must be a significance in that fact. Jesus evidently loved that name, and chose it as His own description of Himself.

I knew a man who obtained, by a legal process, a change in his family-name. The one which he inherited identified him with a race held in contempt in many lands, and whose peculiarities made it the butt of cheap wit, even in our own free country. But the name which he adopted was that of one of the titled families of Great Britain. It was an effort to make the world, dazzled by an aristocratic appellation, forget the man's humble origin.

Oh, how different the spirit of the Lord Jesus! His was "the name above every name." Twice in His ministry on earth did God's voice proclaim: "This is my Beloved Son." And when the Father put it into the mind of Peter to declare, "Thou art the Son of the living God," Jesus solemnly and

impressively accepted that title as His own rightful inheritance.

Why then, as the possessor of such a name, did He persistently speak of Himself as "The Son of Man"?

Was it not because He would have all men know that, Son of God though He was, He identified Himself with the race of sinners He came to save? In the glowing words of St. Paul: "Though He thought it not robbery to be equal with God, He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and became in the likeness of men."

Will you follow me while I point out what this name, "The Son of Man," involved?

(*a*) For one thing, it implies that He could die.

Somewhere I have read of a man born in a European country, but long a citizen of the United States, who, driven by the whips of Conscience, turned his face to his native land with the full knowledge that it would mean his expiating on the scaffold a crime of his youth.

Not Conscience surely, but Love that "counted not His life dear unto Himself," was the resistless force impelling Jesus to die, for no sin of His, but for the sin of the world.

From that hour when in the courts of Heaven the Son of God accepted His commission, "Lo! I come to do Thy will, O God," there was one end toward which, with march as steady as that of an Alpine glacier, the life and ministry of Christ moved on. His own words defined His mission: "The Son of Man is come to give His life a ransom for many."

But stop a moment! The very thought of the Son of God is incompatible with dying. The im-

mortal God cannot die. Neither could He who said: "I and my Father are One." And the very heart and core of this text is, that the Son of God humbled Himself to be the Son of Man, in order that He might die for you and me!

(*b*) But the name, by which Jesus so often called Himself, involves another thought.

Charity nowadays is not satisfied to fling money to the poor as a bone is flung to a hungry dog. Good men and women are honestly trying to put themselves in the place of the submerged classes. Our "settlements" and missions are the solution of the problem, how the rich and comfortable can make themselves one with the victims of direst poverty.

Inadequate as the illustration is, it does give some faint idea of what it was for the Son of God to become the Son of Man.

Let me suggest a question to your minds. If the two noblest souls in American History were to be restored to life, would it be George Washington or Abraham Lincoln who would get closest to the heart of the people? Both were true patriots. Each was in a way the Saviour of his country. Both were of lofty character and unselfish in their aims. And both will live in the grateful memory of Mankind.

But while Washington was born of a long line of illustrious ancestry, the heir of wealth and social position, Lincoln sprang from the lowest stratum of poverty, and was doomed to struggle like a wrestler against the obstacles blocking the pathway of the poor. But Lincoln's lot is that of the vast majority of mankind. Only now and then is a child born to the environment of Washington. And to the vast majority of us the great American, whose birthplace was a log-cabin, whose only university was a coun-

try schoolhouse, and whose rise to eminence was through battles against odds that seemed insuperable, is one of ourselves. We revere Washington, but we love Lincoln.

Thank God that His Word reveals the Son of God as also the Son of Man! For so, He is one with me! Is my life one of toil? The Son of Man was a journeyman carpenter in a Galilean village.

Am I doomed to poverty? The Son of Man had not where to lay His head.

Does affliction thrust its dagger into my soul? The Son of Man was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."

Do temptations swarm all about me, as wolves haunt the traveller on some Siberian steppe? The Son of Man was "tempted in all points, like as I am; yet without sin."

Do my friends prove faithless, and my love meet only chilling ingratitude? The Son of Man was three times in one night denied by one of His chosen friends, and in the same night betrayed to death by another.

O beloved, the Son of God became the Son of Man that He might be one with us. Am I, are you, one with Him? The stream that flowed from the springs of the far North is lost to sight as it pushes toward the South. But only because its waters are merged in the majestic sweep of the Mississippi. So the truest Christian is he whose will is so merged in the will of Jesus, that his whole being is one with the Son of Man!

VII

KEPT IN SAFE-DEPOSIT

"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." II Timothy 1:12.

MEN are strangely unlike each other in the way in which they endure suffering. We ought to expect it. For they vary widely in outward things. No two of us are exactly alike in form or feature, in stature, or tone of voice. But men are no more diverse in personal appearance, than they are in the effects which suffering produces upon them. Some angrily fight it, as the Germans and the Allies are struggling with each other on the battlefields of Europe. Others accept it as the East Indian devotee lies down to be crushed under the car of Juggernaut. There are those whose philosophy enables them to look upon sorrow and calamity with the stoical contempt of the tortured savage at the stake. Still others there are who inhale the chloroform which the High Priestess of the Christian Science cult has brewed, and try to believe what their own common sense rejects: that physical pain and mental agony have no real existence.

The Apostle Paul belonged to neither of these classes. From the hour when he became a Christian, he knew that a career of suffering lay, like some path set thick with broken glass, before his bleeding feet. For Christ Himself said in that momentous

hour: "I will show him what great things he must suffer for my name's sake." That prediction was fulfilled with every sun that rose and set upon the unwearied missionary of the Cross, down to the hour when the sword of the headsman opened to him the gates of Glory!

Paul never attempted to conceal or minimize his troubles. Listen to his own words: "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep; in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils among false brethren. In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst and cold and nakedness."

If a man were, before our eyes, to plunge his hand deep into molten lead, and yet withdraw it without a sign of injury, we could not help asking how he wrought the apparent miracle. If Paul's son in the Gospel, Timothy, asked that question, the answer was given in the text. That answer was two-fold. Paul had come unscathed out of all he had to endure; first because he knew the Christ whom he trusted, and secondly because he knew Christ's power to keep him.

Remember; so far as we know, Paul never actually saw the Lord Jesus but once; and that sight struck him stone-blind for three days. Nor did he merely know the Saviour on the witness of Peter, or James, or John, who had walked and talked with Jesus in Judea and Galilee. How then did Paul know the Lord Jesus? The answer is in the text: "I know Him whom I have trusted."

I read last summer of a bather, just sinking for the third time, saved by a stranger at the peril of his own life. And then the rescuer vanished in the crowd. If that saved man shall never see his deliverer's face, nor even learn his name, yet he knows him. That experience of unselfish and heroic sacrifice revealed the one heart to the other. So did Paul know Christ his Saviour! So do you and I know Him, if from the heart we can say, "I am a sinner saved by grace."

But there was another way in which Paul rose superior to his troubles. If the thought flitted across his mind, "Can I hold out to the end?" it did not ruffle the surface of his confidence. Not because he was trusting any strength of Paul's own. Was it not he who wrote: "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall"? Hear him! "I am persuaded that He is able," or, as it is in the Greek, "is powerful to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

The Apostle had visited the great commercial centres of the Roman Empire, like Antioch, and Ephesus, and Corinth, and Rome itself. But he probably never saw what we know in our modern cities, the strong vaults of a safe-deposit company. Within walls, solid as the Pyramids of Egypt, behind vast valves of steel, and guarded jealously by day and night, are things you dare not trust to any other keeping. But once deposited there, your anxiety vanishes. You are "persuaded" that the subterranean crypt "is able to keep that which you have committed to it."

Exactly thus had Paul made Christ, who had saved him, his depositary for time and for eternity. But it is time for us to ask, What had Paul placed in safe-deposit? He has not made out a list, such as I

presume that some of you business men have made of your bonds and stocks and securities. Yet it does not seem to me difficult to discover his meaning in the expression, " that which I have committed unto," or " have deposited with," Him.

(*a*) The verse which contains the text, and those which precede it, show clearly that Paul was thinking of his outward, physical life and well-being.

Do not be shocked at such a statement! Some people have the false conception of sainthood, that it involves the complete forgetting of the fact that " we have this treasure in earthen vessels." They imagine that a holy life is something which as completely eliminates all thought of the body and its support and care, as when some Buddhist devotee sits day after day, and year after year, motionless, and with eyes fixed upon the ground. If anything like that be the true definition of saintliness, then the Apostle Paul was not a saint. For certainly he did take an interest in the concerns of daily life. His letters are full of it. He declared the Gospel to be profitable for this life, as well as the life to come. He taught how the faith of the Christian would saturate every act and circumstance of his conduct here on earth. He earned his bread at his trade as a tentmaker. In the chill and dampness of his prison-cell, his thoughts went out to " the cloak " he " left at Troas."

But " this life " had for him, far more than for you and me, that which racks the average man with worry. He was poor: he speaks of himself as " having nothing." He had no settled home, and wandered over sea and land. Persecution hounded his track. His Jewish relatives branded him as an apostate. Inside the Church he met with suspicion of

heresy. Because "born out of due time" into the Kingdom of Christ, he had to face the scornful indictment that he was only a pretender to apostleship. When he dictated this second letter to Timothy, he was in Nero's dungeon at Rome, and in hourly expectation of death at the order of that monster of cruelty. He was writing to Timothy in this very verse—"For which cause I suffer these things."

When I was a boy, a Frenchman, named Blondin, used to walk on a tight-rope from side to side of the awful gorge at Niagara, every moment in peril of falling headlong into the boiling flood below. Such daily and hourly exposure to death, in its most fearful shape, was the experience of St. Paul. He himself wrote of himself: "I die daily."

I do not think that I exaggerate when I say that if one of us, who is not a follower of Christ, were to be circumstanced as was St. Paul, he would think that "life was not worth living." Even a hundredth part of what Paul was obliged to undergo has driven thousands to suicide.

That is not all. How about professed believers in the Saviour? I fear, if we had some way to carry an electric light down into the deepest recesses of the souls of a great many members of the Church, we should not find them happy Christians. The circumstances of their outward, ordinary, and daily life, are like that inner garment which the Roman Catholic Church used for a penance for sin; a garment woven of bristles, which perpetually pricked and irritated the sensitive body within. Anxieties about daily bread, fear of poverty as old age creeps upon them, disappointment of cherished schemes, desertion by the very friends whose faithfulness they had anchored upon, somehow put gall and bit-

terness into what ought to be a cup brimming with joy! To some of you in the last fifteen years I have given a little book, which has been blessed to me, entitled "The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life."

Almost two thousand years before that book was written, St. Paul had found out that "secret." Amidst all the circumstances of his strangely chequered life, he assuredly was a happy Christian!

Did he not, when thrust into the deepest dungeon in the jail at Philippi, with his feet in the stocks, and his back gashed and bleeding from the scourge, sing praises to God, till the wondering prisoners heard the hymn?

Did he not say of himself that "in whatever state" he was, he was "therewith content"? Did he not exhort his persecuted brethren to rejoice even in tribulations?

What made this poverty-stricken, homeless, despised, yet hated old man, who describes his position in the eyes of the world as "the off-scouring of all things," what, I say, made him the discoverer and revealer of "the secret of a happy life"?

Exactly what he says in this text: the putting of all the circumstances and conditions of his outward life into safe-deposit. He had deliberately left them in Christ's hands. They are absolutely secure with Him "who is powerful to keep that which Paul had committed to Him."

(*b*) But there was another department of Paul's life which he placed in safe-deposit. I mean his spiritual life; his life as a Christian.

We make a great mistake when we suppose that Paul, because of what God wrought by his instrumentality, was not a sinner like you and me. He was under no such hallucination. He could not for-

get that he had persecuted Christ in the persons of His saints. There was a vivid memory of that awful scene when Christ's first martyr, Stephen, died, and "the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man whose name was Saul." He styled himself on that account, "the chief of sinners." He said that he was "not worthy to be called an Apostle, because he had persecuted the Church of God."

How could a man haunted by such memories ever know one hour of happiness and joy?

Yet, the waves of the Galilean lake were no more calm and unruffled, when Jesus had said, "Peace! be still," than the conscience of this man about the sins of his unregenerate career. He could not forget them. But it was one thing to recall them to memory. It was another to let them rest upon his soul—a weight to crush him to despair!

For he had left them forever in the keeping of Jesus his Saviour. Not time, not eternity, should ever unlock the doors of that vault of oblivion to which the blood of Christ had consigned them. O believer, you to whose memory there sometimes loom up the ghosts of sins into which you sank before you knew the Lord, to you, as to Paul, a voice speaks as you approach this Table: "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions, and will not remember thy sins." Did Paul then cease to be a sinner from the hour that Christ met him on the Damascus road? No more than you and I since Christ first said: "Son, daughter, thy sins are forgiven thee." Paul never made that mistake. I read the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans as one who walks over a field scarred by desperate battle. It is the record of a life and death grapple

"with principalities and powers" of evil. In that chapter he says: "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." All through his days he echoed the words of his brother Apostle John: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

If Paul could come back to earth, and kneel with us at the Table of the Lord, he would join in that confession: "We acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, which we from time to time most grievously have committed." But from that Table, Paul would turn away, his own spirit-taught words ringing through every chamber of his conscience: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."

His daily infirmities and failures, like the old sins of days when he and Christ were strangers, are left with Him, "who is able to keep that which is committed unto Him." But oh, remember; Paul would go from this Table declaring eternal war against that in him which made the suffering of Jesus a necessity, and with hate in his heart forever toward this assassin of his Saviour. May we be shoulder to shoulder with him in waging that war. May our own sin be hateful to us, from this momentous hour! Amen!

VIII

A CRY FOR HELP ANSWERED

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving-kindness; according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions." PSALM 51 : 1.

THE Fifty-first Psalm is a part of God's Word which is indispensable to certain experiences of the Christian's life. As when the "Monna Lisa,"—that priceless work of Art,—had been cut from its frame, no other picture could take its place, so it is with this great penitential psalm of David. It meets a felt want of thousands of the followers of Christ. When a piano-maker is perfecting his instrument, he must have a wire which will respond to the hammer with one particular note of the musical scale. So there are places in the Christian life when nothing in the whole range and diapason of God's truth will exactly meet the need of that hour, except the Fifty-first Psalm.

I mean when a true Christian comes face to face with an acknowleged sin, which has agonized his conscience, and dishonoured his Lord.

There are many passages of the Bible which are recruiting-offices for the army of our King. They seem to hang out a flag inviting souls outside the ranks to enlist under the great "Captain of our Salvation."

But what if I am already enrolled as a soldier of Jesus Christ? What if my commander has entrusted

me with a post of danger and honour, and I have deserted in the face of the enemy?

Is there anything in the Bible to give me hope in such an hour of reproach and shame?

It was in such a terrible emergency, that the Holy Spirit led David to the utterance of this cry for mercy.

I. What the Text Asks For

In Paris there stood, until the madness of the Commune destroyed it, the beautiful shaft known as the Column Vendôme. Surmounted by a statue of Napoleon, it was his monument to his victories. But the mob twined ropes around the graceful structure, overturned it, broke it into pieces, and dragged the bronze fragments through the streets. The very inscriptions it had borne were defaced. Yet those of us who have visited France in these later days, know that it has been restored and replaced in its old position. It is something to know that such a restoration is possible. But better still to learn how that seeming miracle was wrought.

So do I look upon the case of David. I am thankful that the whole story is recorded in the Scriptures. For the King of Israel had been a man of God. His personal character had towered erect as some tall column lifts its stately head skyward.

But in an evil hour the cart-ropes of Sin were wreathed around him. A mob of tempters dragged him from his eminence. The sculptured shaft of his Purity was shattered; and the inscription where the finger of God had written His "new name" had been defaced.

As I read the Fifty-first Psalm to-day, I rejoice in the possibility of the restoration of such a back-

slider. I am thankful that God in the infinitude of His love could rebuild the fallen column of David's character. But I rejoice still more, for the sake of every Christian who has fallen into sin, that the way in which David was restored has been minutely detailed in this most wonderful of the Psalms. For, you see that this text reveals the first step in the process. David began with a cry for mercy. It is the Divine lesson to every Christian whose aching heart and wounded conscience testify that he is not "right with God." There is no other road to peace but that which begins with a frank and self-humbling appeal for mercy.

Do you notice that there is not the slightest attempt at excuse, apology, or even palliation for his sin? No painting out of the hideous features of his guilt appears on the canvas of this psalm. He makes no effort to veil his wickedness under the friendly mist of apologetic explanation.

He does not say: "I was the victim of special and peculiar temptation. The flesh was weak, and the rush of enemy was like the sweep of an avalanche."

In all this prayer of an agonized soul, there is nothing of the kind. The one, solitary, all-absorbing, imperative need of David is mercy. That he must have. For that he cries out in intensity of desire.

O beloved, you may not confess to yourself such awful guilt as rested on the conscience of David. Thank God, if you have been spared the temptations which ensnared him in their meshes. But none the less, there is here a lesson for you and me. For which of us dare say: "I have never fallen into some hidden pitfall, which, if known to the world, would have left me smeared with the mire of dishonour. Nor have I, by a long course of inconsistency, self-

confidence, and neglect of prayer, been paving the sloping path to such a disgraceful fall." Who of us can say that?

Yet let us clearly realize that, terrible as all sin is, the Christian's sin admits of no apology or explanation, no palliation or smoothing over. It wants only mercy. For what is a Christian? Did you ever see a Passion-Flower? The early Spanish settlers of South America believed it was a representation of the suffering of the Saviour. They thought they saw in it the crown of thorns, the nails of the Cross, and the five wounds of Christ.

Was not that what you and I saw, Sunday before last, in the Supper of the Lord?

No sin is so deep-dyed with the stain of ingratitude as the sin of the Christian. For it smites in the face Him who loved us even unto death.

Kinglake's History of the Crimean War tells how, on the battlefield of the Alma, an English officer heard a wounded Russian crying piteously for water. The Briton stooped down, and from his own canteen moistened the man's lips, and then hurried away to his post. But, revived by that draught, the Cossack sent with deadly aim a bullet through the heart of him who had shared his last drop of water with his thirsty and wounded foe.

Is not the Christian's sin like that? For, "while we were yet sinners," or, as another passage expresses it, "when we were enemies," "Christ died for us."

It is not, however, merely the ingratitude of the sin of a Christian which aggravates its sinfulness. It is not merely what Christ has done for us, but what He stands ready yet to do, which makes such sin inexcusable.

For you and I never fell under the evil power of temptation for which God had not provided defence. He never leaves the saved soul, like a shell on the beach, ready to be washed out to sea by the returning tide.

Does a railway company start an engine on a journey of hundreds of miles, yet make no provision for it? Are there no stations where water waits to supply it, no deposits of fuel in expectation of its coming? Whose fault is it if the steam goes down, and the wheels cease revolving?

Well, does not every Christian know beforehand that God's grace is pledged to him for every crisis of his daily journey? Just as of old God entered into contract to supply the wandering Israelites with manna, so does He covenant to meet our soul-needs. I fear that few Christians realize this; and hence come their wanderings and failures. I have a right at the beginning of each day to put myself into the keeping of God, with the expectation, based on His promises, that He will provide defence against specific sins to which that day may expose me. The peril is here: that I take my soul out of God's hands, and prefer to pilot my own ship on the voyage of the day. We fall, because we withdraw our hands from Him who walks beside us. Is there no aggravation of our sins in this? Well may we echo David's Lenten cry: "Have mercy upon me, O God!"

II. Notice on what Ground David Based His Cry for Mercy

"Previous good character" has sometimes mitigated the sentence pronounced upon one who has gone wrong.

And when David found himself arraigned at the bar of conscience, how natural to have justified himself by calling up his past career. He might have lifted up his voice to God with the plea:

"Look back, O Lord, upon my life from my boyhood in the home of my father Jesse! Did ever a shepherd-lad such valiant deeds for the God of Israel? Shall my battles with the Philistines go for naught? Was I not ever loyal to my King, and to my religion? What noble at a royal court ever patiently endured such insults and outrages as I from the hand of Saul? Yet, when his life was in my power, past all deliverance save by a miracle, I refused to slay the anointed of the Lord. Have I not been zealous for the Lord of hosts? Did I not break down the altars, and grind to powder the images of idolatry? And have not my songs of praise drawn the thousands of Israel to the worship of Jehovah?"

Listen! David is on his knees before God. But not one word does he utter about his past services; his past life. Hear his cry: "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, according to Thy loving-kindness!"

He does plead character. But not his own. The character of God is his only ground to hope for mercy. Not David's old virtues, but God's eternal loving-kindness!

Do we follow this ancient example, when Conscience is roused by the Holy Ghost? Listen again! A modern David is on his knees. What is his plea? "Yes; I know that I am not up to the Bible standard. I acknowledge my coldness, lack of zeal, evil tempers, neglect of prayer, indifference to the Bible, all grievous sins, I confess. But how earnest I used to be! How I worked in the Sunday School! How I stood by my pastor! And, even now, how much

more consistent I am than a great many others in the Church!"

My dear fellow-sinner, the moment you plead your own character, you have left the track which shines luminous down the ages in this penitential psalm.

Do not attempt to satisfy God with such reminiscences! Plead, not your character, but His: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving-kindness!"

Do you see how this call for help is based upon experience? There are houses to which the poor return again and again. They have confidence that they will not be repulsed. They have been there before, and know in whose compassion they can trust.

So David felt. He wanted mercy according to what he had already experienced, "according to the multitude of God's tender mercies."

In my boyhood a pair of robins came back every year to build their nest, and rear their young in an old tree near the house in which I was born. They knew by past experience that they were welcome there.

O beloved, let us, in our consciousness of sin, flee again to the Cross as at the first. We have learned the way, and we know how burdens are lifted there.

III. Lastly, Notice What David Asked Should Be Done with His Sins

He may have caught his idea from the way that soiled garments were cleansed in Palestine. Just as now in Continental Europe, they laid the fabric on the stones in the bed of a running brook and beat it till the stain had disappeared.

The cleansing David pleaded for, might put him

underneath the rod. It might involve the heavy blows of tribulation. But cleansed he must be. Nothing else would satisfy his need. So he cried: "Blot out my transgressions." Exactly what did he mean?

Probably, first of all, he wanted the punishment of his sin remitted. In the swelling bud, be it of an apple-tree or deadly night-shade, the fruit is wrapped up. So is punishment always wrapped up in the bud of sin. It is useless to talk of getting rid of the penalty of sin. It is there, sure to mature in its season. No man ever sinned, for which punishment was not awarded. Visited it must be; either on the sinner or his substitute. I do not know how clearly David saw, down the ages, the Cross of Jesus. But he did want the penalty of his sin to be lifted from his own soul. And you and I know that God was not trifling with us, when He made Isaiah to prophesy of Christ, "The Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all." But the blotting out of David's sin was far more than this rolling off the penalty upon Him who said, "I give my life a ransom for many." What he wanted was relief for a wounded conscience. David's repenting was not of the sort which leads an incendiary to be sorry that he set his neighbour's house on fire, when the wind blows the flames toward his own dwelling. This whole Psalm shows that David's anxiety was less on account of punishment than on account of sin itself. A load of lead was on his spirit. There was a stain on his conscience. As when you stir an ants' nest, ten thousand crawling things come to the surface, so did agonizing recollections of his sin creep over the conscience made sensitive by the convicting power of God's Spirit.

So it is with sinners of a later day. When passion has subsided; when self-bolstering excuses have been put to silence; when under the quiet stars excitement has died away; or when in the sleepless night the very darkness seems to shed a glare of light upon the past, then is the sinful soul's Gethsemane!

But oh, thank God! even Conscience can be pacified by the blood of Jesus. The burden rolls off at the foot of the Cross. On Him who said, "It is finished," the guilt of the penitent believer is laid. Not a shred, not an atom, is left for the conscience to bear!

But, most wonderful of all, sin laid upon the Crucified Jesus is blotted out from the memory of God. We men and women cannot always forget. It is a weakness of human nature that what we try to bury past all resurrection will, in some unlooked-for hour, burst from its grave. I question whether anything is altogether forgotten by us. The imperishability of memory is like seeds, which, after centuries of burial, germinate at last. It is the scar showing its mark when the wound has healed.

I bless God that His mind does not share that weakness of humanity. He is not the slave of Memory. He can forget. How do I know that? Listen! "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions, and will not remember thy sins." Listen again! "For I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sins no more."

Christian, was ever such a God as thine? Wonderful, O God, art Thou, that Thou canst forget! We men recall the great historic fields of battle. We build monuments that they may not fade from human recollection.

But God seems to forget them. Over the bullet-

strown plain He makes the corn to wave. The grass veils the scars of the earthworks. Even the graves of those who fell He covers up under the sweet oblivion of flowers. So doth He cover in forgetfulness, and blot out from His own memory, the marks of our battles against Him. The love of Christ, like golden grain, and velvet grass, and fragrant flowers, hides forever the sin of him who puts his trust in Jesus!

IX

"IS IT NOTHING TO YOU?"

"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me; wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of His fierce anger?"
LAMENTATION 1 : 12.

A WEEK ago I received a letter from a friend, who had just visited what is known as "the weeping place" at Jerusalem. At the base of the wall which once supported the west side of the Temple of Herod, the Jews have met for centuries and mourned the desolations of the Holy City.

Christian and Pagan, Turk and Crusader, have each in turn extorted vast sums from those who were ready to buy at any price "the miserable privilege of kissing the huge stones, and pouring out their lamentations at the foot of their ancient sanctuary." The text seems like an echo borne across the sea from the wailing-place of Jerusalem. What unutterable sorrow is in its very tone! But it has another aspect. For does it not suggest the distress of Him who, on the Cross of Calvary, cried out: "My God! my God! why hast Thou forsaken me?"

I do not mean that this language of Jeremiah is as unmistakable a type and foreshadowing of Christ, as the sacrifice of Isaac, or the institution of the Passover. But I do mean that the grief expressed in these words is strikingly suggestive of that vicarious

suffering of our Lord which Good Friday always brings to our memory.

In some foreign picture-gallery I have had my attention suddenly riveted upon a portrait which I knew could never have been meant to perpetuate the face and figure of my friend. He surely never sat for it: but none the less it does my heart good to see on that canvas his features reproduced with startling likeness.

It seems to me that this lamentation of Jeremiah, when Jerusalem lay in ruins, when the Temple had been desecrated, and when the flower of the nation had been swept away into exile, has its striking resemblance to the sorrow under which our Lord was crushed as He hung upon the Cross of Calvary.

I. To Whom Are These Words Addressed?

"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?"

How the wrath of the civilized world blazed out against the officers of a ship, from whom a wireless message of distress elicited neither answer nor assistance! In that air-borne appeal for help they must have had a vision of the black smoke, the lurid flames, and the terror which gripped the hearts of men and women and little children. But the call was unheeded. Like the priest and the Levite in the parable, they "passed by on the other side." It was "nothing to them."

To-day, in every Christian land, the churches open wide their doors. Wherever a church tower contains a bell, it tolls its solemn call: "Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow."

But the great, busy throng pass by. To them it is "nothing." Why then preach upon a text which upon its surface is a call to the thoughtless, indif-

ferent world outside? O beloved, because it is also a call to those who confess the Saviour's name. It ought equally to find response in the hearts and consciences of those to whom Good Friday is a sacred day. Do we Christians ever realize as we ought that Jesus, as the suffering Saviour, is everything to us? In other words, do we, outside of our Lent and Passion Week services, keep close to the Cross of the Lord Jesus? His sorrows and suffering are everything to us, because we are sinners. No one of us denies that fact. How humbly did we acknowledge it a few minutes ago, as we said to God: "There is no health in us"!

But we cannot read the New Testament without an equally strong conviction that Jesus was as free from all sin as we are entangled in its net.

Then how comes it to pass that the Sinless One suffers? We know that sin deserves its penalty. But how explain the perplexing riddle that the only spotless Man in human history is the One on whom such suffering is allowed to fall?

I heard of an incident which occurred here in Chicago some years ago, that throws light upon our problem. Of two brothers one was a reckless spendthrift, who waded up to his eyes in the swamps of debt. The other was a prudent and successful man of business.

But one day when the rich man gave up his home, sold property to which he had unquestioned title, went into a humble apartment in an obscure street, and literally began life over, it was not wonderful that the public comment was: "He had no debts of his own. It must have been to save his reckless brother."

Surely, that prodigal must have felt that his

brother's sacrifice of himself was everything to him! That is the underlying thought of Good Friday. No possible solution of the innocent and holy Jesus bearing the awful agony to which the four Gospels give testimony, except that He, our Elder Brother, made Himself a sacrifice for us. God forbid that we should "pass by" and not realize that His sorrow was everything to us!

But Christ in His suffering is everything to us, because without Him we are ever unsatisfied. Does not our own eagerness to overtake some imagined good remind us of a child chasing butterflies? Away! after the gaudy thing with painted wings! Away! over marsh and meadow, over ploughed fields and stony pastures! Quick! you are gaining upon it! The face is flushed with excitement. The eye flashes with anticipation. The hand is outstretched to grasp the shining prize! Have you caught it? Unclasp your hand. There it lies, a poor moth crushed and dying, its colours fading, its exquisite plumage turned to brown dust in your hand!

What butterflies you and I have chased! We were not always unsuccessful. We did sometimes grasp the prize. But how much more beautiful, how much more to be desired it was when it flitted before us in the race, than when we actually possessed ourselves of it! It does not satisfy. Why? Oh, because I cannot cure the pain at my heart with such remedies as these. I want something which gives me assurance that I am at perfect peace with God. Husks do not satisfy my hunger. I cannot trust my weight to a thread of the spider's weaving.

A minister sat reading the eighth chapter of Romans to a dying man. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

"Stop!" said the eager listener; "stop there! I can hang my whole weight for eternity on that testimony."

Dear friends, do any of us lack peace? Is it not because we persist in trying to find the threads out of which the fabric of peace is to be woven, in ourselves? We are trying to cast anchor in the hold of our ship! Look outward! Look upward! Have you sinned more grievously than that Pharisee who persecuted the early Church, who dragged men and women who believed in Jesus, to prison, and when they were put to death, gave his testimony against them? But Saul of Tarsus looked upon the Good Friday scene, and wrote for your help and mine: "He hath made peace by the blood of His Cross."

II. The Text Calls Attention to an Unparalleled Sorrow

There is something like a challenge in its language: "Behold; and see if there be any sorrow like my sorrow!"

Jeremiah wrote these words when his country and his countrymen, his beloved city and the sanctuary of his God, had been overwhelemed with the desolations of fire and sword!

Did you ever read Josephus's description of that Babylonian siege and capture of Jerusalem? No nightmare was ever equal to its horrors! We can almost hear the wail of the doomed city: "Behold; and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow!"

Surely, our Lord Jesus Christ could have given that challenge. His sorrows knew no parallel in human history. But I fear we are apt to let our minds dwell upon the outward and physical sufferings,

rather than upon those which He suggested when He said: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death." I may study the frame to the neglect of the picture. Vesuvius is seamed with deep gorges, and rugged with upheaved rocks. But that which makes the volcano terrible is the convulsion in its depths! The greatest suffering that any man is called to bear, is not that of the body, but of the spirit within.

As I read in my morning paper, a day or two ago, that those unspeakable monsters, who are making Mexico a slaughter-house, had threatened some ecclesiastic with crucifixion, all the terrors of such a mode of execution rose up before my vision. But the physical agony of the Roman Cross on which our Lord was nailed could not make atonement for your sin or mine.

Thousands of martyrs have borne crucifixion. Can you believe that when the Apostle, constantly exposed to such an ending of his own life, cried: "O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?"—can you believe that when martyrs went singing with gladness to the cross, the stake, and every hideous shape in which cruelty could inflict death, Jesus could have such a horror of mere physical suffering, that He prayed that its cup might "pass from" Him?

To believe that the death by crucifixion could make Him, even in the mere anticipation of it, experience an agony in which "His sweat was as it were, great drops of blood," seems to me to dishonour Him.

It was the soul of the Saviour, on which rested the awful weight of the sins of the world. "The sting of death," says St. Paul, "is sin." And that sting was piercing the heart of Jesus for the millions of sinners in whose stead He bared His heart to the

sharp pang. Can you not hear His voice: "Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow!"

Beautifully has our Communion Service said: "Who made these, by His one oblation of Himself once offered, a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world."

III. In Conclusion, Do Not Fail to Notice that This Unmitigated Sorrow Was Laid upon Christ by God Himself

What if I pour out the wealth of my care and devotion upon the rare plant in my garden; and then suddenly tear it up by the roots, and fling it out into the streets to be trodden under foot? That is human nature. I am a man, with all the fickleness and liability to change that belongs to my race. But God never changes. "He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." Could He come to look upon His only begotten and dearly beloved Son with anger? Yet here it speaks of sorrow inflicted "in the day of God's anger." It is echoed both in the Old Testament and the New. Far down the future the Prophet Zechariah saw the Lord Jesus, and cried: "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the Man that is my fellow, saith the Lord."

So too Isaiah: "It hath pleased the Lord to bruise Him. He hath put Him to grief."

Hear Christ Himself beneath the olives of Gethsemane: "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Yet not my will, but Thine be done!"

As He hung upon the Cross, He uttered the cry: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

Did you ever drop a pebble over the brink of some

abyss, and listen to hear it strike bottom, but listened all in vain? So deep is the mystery of God's wrath visited upon the sinless Jesus! But, beloved, as he who, in some tunnel, sees no light save the one tiny spark at the further end, and follows that guide till it leads to high noonday, so there is but one explanation of this mystery of the Cross.

I mean the truth that Jesus, as our substitute, had taken the penalty of our sins upon Himself. Truly "it pleased God to bruise Him." But, "He was bruised for our transgressions. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed."

What does all this show as to God's estimate of sin?

It was a light thing, in the opinion of a reckless young man, that he had forged a paper which gained him money. But when his father sacrificed all that he had to make good the debt of crime, and coined the needed money from his heart's blood to save the culprit from the fate he deserved, you say, it proved his passionate love for his son. Ah, yes; but it proved something else. It proved the father's estimate of the forger's crime! It had to be punished, even if he whose broken heart was innocent suffered for the guilty. Our sin may be reckoned by you and me as a light thing; but at the Cross we read God's estimate of its incalculable guilt!

But how "full, perfect, and sufficient" was that expiation!

In a great railway machine-shop an army of workmen were toiling one summer afternoon. The place was a vision of the iron age. Piles of broken iron lay on every side. Iron rails and beams, iron wheels and shafts, iron in motion and at rest; everywhere was iron!

Perhaps those busy men did not notice that the sky was black as night. The air seemed turned to fire. Lightning was flashing, and ran in zig-zag lines down the great dome of the sky.

Look! it comes through the open windows! Over the machinery electric flames leap from point to point! They touch the masses of iron, they flicker on lathe and drill. But not one workman was harmed. The electric power was exhausted upon the metal and left the artisans untouched.

Are you, am I, in Christ? Then He is above, beneath, and round about us. The lightnings of God's loathing of our sin were spent on His soul when darkness veiled Calvary; and the solid earth shivered to know that God's Only Begotten Son was forsaken of His Father! The righteous demands of a holy law were exhausted on Him who died with the words upon His lips: "It is finished." "Therefore, there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

O soul; where art thou? In Christ Jesus? Or are there any here to whom He calls from the Cross: "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?"

X

THE EDUCATION OF A LEADER

"And the Angel-Jehovah appeared to him in a flame of fire, out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burned."

EXODUS 3:2, 3.

THE lapse of Time affects men as it affects molten metal. Its tendency is to fix their character, settle their opinions, and render them incapable of change.

Three times over, in three different parts of the Scripture, are we told that Moses had reached the ripe age of forty years before he felt the first impulse to become a deliverer of his brethren from bondage in Egypt. Surely, God has not set up so many finger-posts on our road of Bible-study without meaning to convey to us a most important lesson.

Motley, in his History of the Dutch Republic, tells us how Philip of Spain wreaked his vengeance on his mighty rival, William of Orange. The son of the great Netherlander was a hostage in the hands of the Spanish King. There was no deed of blood from which Philip shrank. But he did not murder the youth thus wholly in his power. He simply educated him to be a Spaniard and a Papist. Years afterward, Philip restored the young man to his native country. But it was a worse than useless gift. The

prince had come to hate the land of his birth. His character had grown Jesuitical. Time had hardened the impression of Philip's seal beyond the power of change.

Why was it not thus with Moses? For the first forty years of his life he was bred at the court of Pharaoh. There was his education. He was, says the Bible, "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians." The tradition of the Jews interprets his adoption by Pharaoh's daughter to mean that he became "the heir apparent" of the Egyptian throne.

Why, then, did he not become an Egyptian? How does it come to pass that, true as the needle to the pole-star, at forty years of age he seeks to affiliate himself with the Hebrew slaves in Egypt, and even refuses "to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter"? That contradicts a good deal of human experience, and reverses our ideas as to the effect of education.

But the explanation is at hand. The Epistle to the Hebrews declares: "By faith he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." That is a secret of power worth knowing. Faith is the eye that sees the invisible, the ear that hears the inaudible, the hand that grasps the intangible.

But suppose I ask: "Whence came such faith? What was the secret seed out of which it grew? How could that seed germinate in Egyptian heathenism?" The Bible has an answer to that question. His own mother had the training of his earliest childhood. She was the nurse to whom Pharaoh's daughter entrusted the infant rescued from the Nile. We are not told how long the child was in her keeping. But we certainly know that it was long enough to sow in that young mind the seeds of faith. Hers

was the first chance. She had the start of all Egyptian teachers. Her time may have been short; but she used it.

I say to any mother here: this is your brief day of God-given opportunity. May your influence and example implant in the hearts of your children a faith which after forty years shall bear its witness!

Let us turn from this preliminary thought to notice,

I. The School in Which God Trained Moses for His Great Work

Ambition is like the stirring of the sap in the heart of a tree, when the springtime quickens its pulse. There are periods when a man's soul is roused to hear the voice of God calling him to some great work. Such an experience had come to Moses forty years before this scene at the Burning Bush. Though adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter and an Egyptian prince, he had gone out "to visit his brethren, the children of Israel." He was conscious of the stirrings of leadership in his soul. He realized the bitterness of the bondage of his brethren, till a fierce indignation flamed up within him. He had stretched out his hand, and struck down the Egyptian taskmaster who had ill-treated a Hebrew. You cannot but feel, as you read the account, that thus early Moses had dreamed that he was to be the leader of his people.

God had a different estimate of the qualities that such leadership demanded. From God's point of view, a proud spirit and an ungovernable temper were not the traits which marked out a leader of Israel from bondage. Though this man was then

forty years of age, God sent him to school and that for forty years more!

What a hurry we people of Chicago were in to rebuild the city desolated by the great fire of 1871. Business was at stake; and men could not wait for the frosts of winter to end. Up went the buildings; but only to prove the peril of haste. Walls cracked and foundations settled.

So it is likely to be in any work into which we plunge, under the stimulus of enthusiasm. We push for results; and in our hurry are apt to overlook all questions of adequate preparation. Every now and then I meet grey-haired men who in youth were in a hurry to enter on their life-work. They rushed by leaps and bounds into business or a profession. They could not wait for apprenticeship or study. Their whole after life bears witness to their early haste. God's way is the exact opposite of all this. He always takes time for His preparations. If geology has made any one thing clear, it is the lesson of long and patient foundation-laying. Who knows how many ages the Creator was piling up the strata of this globe, before He made it the scene of human history?

We know that Moses had an idea of his splendid destiny as a leader of God's people when he first "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." For the Divine testimony is: "He supposed that his brethren would have understood, how that God by his hand would deliver them."

How fascinating to an eager and ambitious temperament it must have been to look forward to such a place in history! How natural to chafe like a warhorse against the bit, when delay was forced upon him! Was he not singularly fitted for the task?

Had he not royal rank, educational advantages, and the ripe experience of forty years? No other mortal man could wield such a sceptre of power over Egypt on the one hand and Israel on the other! Surely, the hour has struck, and he is the leader whom the hour demands!

What does God do? Why, for forty years more, He sends Moses to school in the lonely land of Midian. The sheepfold, the desert, the wandering life of the Bedouin Arab, were the rudiments of his training for his real work.

What sort of a man was he at the beginning of that period? Passionate, ready to shed blood when his fellow Israelite was oppressed, allowing no check upon his furious temper; Moses seems the original of the portrait painted by one of the Proverbs: "Proud and haughty scorner is his name who dealeth in proud wrath."

There is a later portrait of this same man. Forty years have fled. Israel is well on the way to Canaan with Moses at their head. In the book of Numbers God has painted a picture of His servant: "Now the man Moses was very meek; above all men that were on the face of the earth." How had he become so? What process had wrought so complete a transformation?

Ah! he had been at school, and God had been his Teacher. Out on the vast plains, his sheep his only comrades, at night keeping vigil under the solemn stars, he had come into communion with God! He had time to pray. He had learned how fiery passions could be curbed. It took all that time to fit him to be the leader of the Exodus.

How practical the lesson! No doubt God has work for every Christian. The youngest need not wait

an hour. The fields are white for the harvest; and the reapers are few. But when God wants a leader, He is apt to keep him long at school.

When a few weeks hence the world recalls the birth of Abraham Lincoln, and hails him as the deliverer of a race out of bondage, we are apt to forget that his was a hard schooling. Poverty hovered over his cradle. Gross ignorance clouded his home atmosphere. He had to grope like the blind for intellectual light. His political ambitions were overwhelmed by defeat; and only after fifty years did his country discover what was in him. That was the school in which the education of a peerless chief among men was carried on.

We need such patient ripening of the fruit in our reformatory and religious work.

I confess that I tremble when the wretched drunkard of yesterday is pushed to the front in temperance reform. I cannot but feel doubt of the wisdom which makes evangelists and leaders in revivals out of men who have just deserted the camp of Unbelief or Godlessness. The Bible seems to me to have a lesson for us in Moses' experience in the desert of Midian.

I wonder if there is here no Christian who thought, in the first flush of his love for the Saviour, that his was to be no obscure work. He was conscious of qualities which fitted him for great achievements. He aspired to be a leader in the sacramental host. He wanted to strike resistless blows in the Master's cause.

Somehow, his dream has not been fulfilled. He has waked up to find himself humbled by failure. Besetting sin has flung him down in the ashes of penitence. He never knew before what hidden evils

were in the depths of his nature. He has been driven to the desert. Alone with God, he has wondered at his failures.

My dear brother, that is God's school. He saw that you were not ready for your task. You did not know yourself. You had not been humbled to such a sense of your weakness as made you cry out: "Who is sufficient for these things?" You have not yet been graduated from God's school.

II. Now Let Us Turn to the Peculiar Way in Which God Appeared to Moses

Wonderfully appealing are the pictures of military life which the government recruiting officers have posted up all along the streets of the city. They make the calling of the soldier the most attractive of occupations.

Every business man finds his mail deluged with wonderful opportunities for investment. They figure out the certainty of gain, the impossibility of loss. There are dividends, but no discounts.

No such deceptive attractions did Christ hold out to draw new recruits. Listen! "He that will be my disciple, let him take up his cross and deny himself." Transparent honesty points out beforehand that the service of Christ means much that men count loss. How the Bible proves itself one book from cover to cover! The Old Testament reveals the same spirit.

God called Moses at the Burning Bush to a mighty responsibility. He was to go to the presence-chamber of Pharaoh with the command of One who was King of kings: "Let my people go!"

But on the threshold of this great office to which

God appoints Moses, He warns him: "I know that he will not let you go." As much as to say, "Do not deceive yourself! Yours is no holiday task. To execute your high commission will involve danger, and demand patience, faith, and courage."

But God did not stop there. The very symbol and object-lesson by which He taught Moses is pregnant with the same warning. A bush on fire, yet not consumed!

The Church of Scotland, born amid the throes of the Reformation, has the Burning Bush as its corporate seal. It ought to be the seal of every Church and of every individual believer.

We Christians are not exempt from tribulation. We sometimes think our cup of bitter wine is filled to a higher point than that of others; that hotter flames of affliction are kindled for us than for an unbelieving world. But as God's Word is true, we may live in the midst of the fires. The bush burns, but is not consumed. The old prophetic promise holds: "When thou passest through the fires, thou shalt not be burned."

Why was that desert-bush thus wrapped in flames not consumed? Remember that "God called to Moses out of the midst of the bush." How could it be burned when Jehovah Himself was in it? How can the true Christian be destroyed by trials, when the Everlasting God is with him there?

But above all, observe how this strange scene attracted Moses. It roused his curiosity, as it would yours or mine, to notice that the fire did not destroy the bush itself. "And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burned." It was so unprecedented, so contrary to experience, that he must find out the cause.

So it has been from that day down to this. That men can live, even rejoice in God, in the midst of trouble, draws others as gravitation draws the planets!

How Jews and Gentiles conspired to persecute the early Church! How the gigantic power of the Roman Empire hurled itself like an avalanche on the new-born Christianity! Herod, Nero, Domitian hold their places in human memory chiefly by the record of their savage attempts to crush the Church of Christ. But it did not perish in the flames. The martyrs died; but Christianity lived on. Three centuries saw it mount the imperial throne of the Cæsars. Why? Because here was a phenomenon that the world could not explain. When their reason was baffled by this bush burning, yet not consumed, they "turned aside to see this great sight."

So in the Reformation. The Inquisition could burn men's bodies. It could not consume their souls. In the flames Protestant truth lived, because God was in it. It attracted men. They must know the cause of so strange an anomaly. Out of every land in Europe they "turned aside to see this great sight" "why the bush was not burned."

O beloved, do you want to draw men to the faith you profess? You may preach, and they may turn a deaf ear. You may pray, and not a voice may say "Amen." But when Life's trials come, when Poverty grinds like a millstone, and Disappointment turns the cup of Hope to gall; when Sickness paralyzes effort, and Death puts out the light of the home; then, if you live through it all, the world will "turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned."

Quaint old John Bunyan caught a glimpse of the heavenly glory: "Just as the gates were opened

to let in the men, I looked in after them; and behold! the city shone like the sun. The streets were paved with gold, and in them walked many with crowns upon their heads, and golden harps to sing praises withal. And, after that they shut up the gates. Which, when I had seen, I wished myself among them."

Christian, there are some here who have followed you to the very gates of salvation through the precious blood of Christ. They have seen you enter in. They look in after you through "gates ajar."

Does your faith shine like the sun? Are the paths you tread gold-paved with peace? Upon your head is there a crown of joy over the love of Jesus? Does the harp of your daily life ring out thanksgiving?

Then shall they, when they have seen, wish themselves among you.

XI

TWO OFFICE-SEEKERS

"She saith unto Him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in Thy Kingdom." MATTHEW 20:20, 21.

IN the parallel passage in St. Mark we learn that just before the circumstance mentioned in the text, our Lord and His disciples had visited Cæsarea-Philippi.

That was the splendid capital of Herod Antipas. There these fishermen had perhaps caught some idea of what a royal court was. Crowns, sceptres, gorgeously-robed officials, and decorated men of war, dazzled their imagination. Their minds had become saturated with pomp and splendour beyond the wildest dreams of Galilean peasants.

Suddenly that dream seems to become a reality. The goal appears within their reach. For had not Jesus said to the Apostles: "In the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of His glory, then shall ye also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel"?

A few days ago the papers published the announcement made by the Chief Engineer of the Panama Canal, of the exact date when the first vessel will pass through from ocean to ocean. But with it was coupled the statement of the millions upon millions that the enterprise has cost. As I read it, I felt dazed and bewildered. The vastness of the sum

flashed upon my mind the thought of what I could do with such fabulous wealth. Suppose that as I stand here at this pulpit, a tenth, a hundredth part of that amount were laid at my feet in crisp bank-notes or glittering gold. Some such vision must have risen before the eyes of the Twelve, as Jesus unveiled to them their future reward. Surely, He was not a man to make promises He could not keep. He had fed five thousand hungry mouths by miracle. He had healed lepers and raised the dead by His word. Then He had power to seize on Herod's throne. He could make of His Apostles twelve princes of the realm! Had He not just told them so?

Now, however it may have affected all the Twelve, we know how the thought operated upon the minds of two of them. James and John were set on fire with worldly ambition. The two highest dukedoms or peerages must be theirs. The sooner they make their application, the better. They approach Christ with their claim, and, that it may be pressed with more vigour, their mother reinforces them in their appeal.

I. Let Us Look Carefully at These Two Office-Seekers

Some months ago I spoke in a sermon of the sort of faces Leonardo da Vinci gave the Apostles in his fresco of the Last Supper. I do not recall that of St. James. But that of St. John, in which da Vinci has been imitated by succeeding painters, is of a sort of feminine beauty. If it be supposed to give expression to religious feeling, it is the religion of a dreaming poet, or a cloistered nun.

Do you know where, if I were to try my hand at

picturing St. John as he was at this period of his career, I would find my model?

Perhaps I shall shock you, when I say that I would go downtown on the eve of an election, and select as my type of this Apostle some candidate for a municipal office, as he button-holes some voter. I should find my modern reproduction of this son of Zebedee, as he grows eloquent over what his party has done for the city, and what he is going to do if elected to the office he craves.

"But," you will say, "this comparison degrades the Apostles. Such men could hardly be Christians at all."

That is the sweeping reasoning of men ignorant of their own sinfulness, and of the power of temptation. I believe that James and John were genuine followers of Christ. They were just what He called them—"disciples."

We often mistake the meaning of that word. For it signifies nothing more than pupils of a teacher. They may be pupils of a high grade or a low. They may have just entered the school, or they may be on the verge of graduation. But the point is that the disciples of Jesus Christ are merely scholars in His school.

What I believe about James and John is, that they had some religious life. But it was the blade just springing from the seed. They had received their Master as the "Light of the world"; but as yet reflected His glory only as a wintry sky at day-dawn reflects in cold grey the sun not yet risen.

These were scholars who had a great deal to learn. They must go through hard discipline before they could become the James who died for Christ's cause—martyred at Herod's command—or the John

who wrote: "Little children, love one another."

There is a practical lesson on the surface of this truth. How tender we ought to be of the faults of young Christians! Though James and John had given up their nets and boats and "forsaken all" for Jesus, they were only "babes in Christ." They yielded to a low ambition, and fell into the selfishness of place-hunting, and scheming to get an advantage over their fellow-disciples.

But notice how gently the Saviour rebukes them! He does not overwhelm them with reproaches. He deals with them as we would with a child who had strayed from the path. With infinite patience, He again takes up with them the oft-repeated lesson: "My Kingdom is not of this world."

Do we, who for ten or twenty or forty years have been members of Christ's Kingdom, deal thus gently with those just beginning the Christian life? When a grown man reels along the street, every moment threatening to fall headlong, perhaps we are not wholly to blame when we say that he has brought it on himself by drink.

But when a tiny child, just trying its feet, totters and sways here and there, we hurry to stretch out our hands to keep it from falling. Should we not deal as gently with "babes in Christ"?

But there is a profounder lesson in this passage.

When we think seriously about this secret application for high office, how mean and pitiful appears the ambition of the two disciples and their mother!

When I visited Abbotsford many years ago, I realized how unsatisfying is the ambition which covets social distinction. Sir Walter Scott wore out his life to produce his novels. Yet strange to say, it was not because he was so eager to gain literary fame.

He valued his talent for romance as an instrument with which to establish at Abbotsford a new glory for the ancient line of the Scotts.

A family founded, a baronial estate and splendid mansion, a revival of feudal aristocracy in his own person as lord of the manor, were more to poor Sir Walter than all his literary glories. A wild dream it was, and never to be realized. When his debts were paid, and Abbotsford beyond the reach of creditors, his children were dead. To-day the world reads his novels; but Abbotsford belongs to some remote branch of the line which Sir Walter toiled to glorify.

What James and John coveted was the bauble of social distinction. They pictured Jesus on a throne like Herod's. On each side of that central throne were six seats for Christ's Apostles. But closest to the king were to be the places assigned to James and John.

Mark it well! It was not a laudable desire to be near Christ to drink in His teaching, and by personal communion with Him to become more like Him. It was only to get positions of dignity nearest the centre of all royal power. It was simply a craving for better social rank than these fishermen had known before in their humble occupation.

Strange, passing strange, it is, that something like that is one of the besetting evils of our day.

Do not mistake my meaning! I am not speaking of that praiseworthy ambition so to improve one's social condition by education and refinement, that the gates to high places will open automatically.

But I do mean the using of religion and the Church as a ladder by which to climb. One day I was speaking with one of you, and told the story of some

who had once worshipped here, but who dropped out because of the lack of social attention. They had come to church; but, except the ministers, nobody took notice of them. Tired of such an experience, they drifted away.

Such reports grieve the heart of a pastor. It ought not so to be. As one of our religious papers has said: "Handshaking is a means of grace."

Some of the best men and women whom this church has ever enrolled in its flock came as total strangers, but were held here through cordial greeting from older members of the parish.

But the passage we are studying suggests that there is another side to all this. The complaints of unsociability in the Church too often grow directly out of making the Church a road to some social opportunity.

See how exactly this eagerness for social recognition through the instrumentality of the Church corresponds with the greed of James and John for high places in Christ's Kingdom. What else is it but a failure to see that the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus is "not a kingdom of this world"? There may be, and often is, though the visible Church, the incidental advantage of blessed friendships. But the first and most essential of the purposes for which the Church of Christ exists is not the cultivation of good society. It is a place where we ought to get a more intimate acquaintance with Christ Himself and with His work.

II. We Find in This Narrative a Singularly Mistaken Prayer

The statues and pictures of the old Greek and Roman artists represented Love as blind. It meant

that Love could see no fault in its beloved object. Perhaps, however, it suggests a deeper truth.

Before one we dearly love we see two roads opening. The one is easy to travel. There are no heavy grades. The scenery is pleasant. The company is jovial.

The other road is blocked by difficulties. Few of the great, the influential, or the fashionable, travel that way. But this last path has a guide-board written by the finger of God: "This is the way: walk ye in it!"

Each of us knows how hard it is to make choice of that strait and narrow road, even for ourselves. But how much harder to choose it for our beloved one!

At such a forking of the road stood Salome, the mother of James and John. She was the spokeswoman for her sons. Perhaps she imagined that she could wield a special influence over Christ because of her relationship to Mary, the Lord's mother.

Be that as it may, she it was who pressed the petition in her sons' behalf.

What a blundering prayer it was!

Somewhere I have read of grain so scattered on the ground as to entrap a whole covey of young quails. But it was the call of the mother-bird that lured them to the bait. So blind was this mother's love.

Salome wanted James and John raised to a splendid height above their brethren, and to be nobles and dignitaries of the royal court of the Son of David.

The Greeks had a story of a Spartan, Pausanias by name, condemned for treason to be walled up alive in the temple where he had taken refuge. But

it was his own mother who brought the first stone to block up the doorway of his living grave. No such unnatural mother was Salome. Nor have we such in our day. Our American mothers plan, work, and economize for their children.

But for what? To get them into "Society," to put them on the track of riches, to push them forward to places of prominence.

Do not suppose that I am indiscriminatingly condemning such a drift of parental affection. As a subordinate and secondary thing it may be the duty of the father and mother. But when it is the first and supreme desire of a parent for a child, it is as hopeless a blunder as Salome's prayer for her sons.

Father, mother, be honest with yourself. Is your first and overmastering desire for your children that they may be Christ's, living for Him in this world, living with Him forever in the world to come? Or, is it that they may have what the world calls "success," may make money, get reputation, and gain a place in the front rank of social life?

See too what an ignorant petition was this which Salome asked of Christ.

In the hurry of your business, some one comes to your office asking your signature to a petition. Pressed for time, you half read it, and affix your name. By and by you see it in a daily newspaper, and are horrified at your mistake. You had no idea of what you had asked over your own signature.

Is not that exactly what the Master tells these petitioners? "Ye know not what ye ask."

O beloved, it were better to trifle with dynamite than to have some prayers answered! Look at this one: "Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one

on Thy right hand, and the other on the left, in Thy Kingdom."

None could sit with Christ in that glory, except through suffering like Christ's. He must drink of Christ's cup, and be baptized with the baptism of Jesus. That is true, even in this present world.

Take for example such a man as Martin Luther. He seems to sit with the Master in the visible Church. The Church which bears his name enrolls nearly sixty millions of members. Posterity exalts him to a throne of glory. But through what did Martin Luther climb to that elevation? Hate, slander, persecution, the casting out of his name as leprous, these filled to the brim the cup he drank, and entered into the baptism with which he was baptized.

The same rule holds even in purely spiritual things. We ask to be made holy. We would be crowned with the white lilies of Purity. St. John saw such in his Revelation: "These are they that have come out of great tribulation; and washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, and made them white."

Do we know what we ask?

We ask that our Church may be stirred to its depths by the Holy Spirit. We seek that every member may be made Christlike, every man and woman in the congregation may be led to the Cross. But, dear friends, that means the giving up of much that we have tried to keep. Have we counted the cost? Do we know what we ask?

O beloved friend, on the boundary-line of Christ's Kingdom, are you at heart praying, "O Christ, Thou Saviour of sinners, save me"? Are you ready to give up sin, to speak out for Christ, to consecrate your best powers to Him? That is what salvation through Him means. Do you know what you ask?

Yet I plead with you to ask that very prayer this hour, realizing what it means. Hear, as my closing word, what Christ pledges to those who "seek first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness."

"They shall receive manifold more in this present life, and in the world to come, life everlasting."

XII

A LIVING LETTER

"Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men; forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart."

II Corinthians 3:2, 3.

WE do not always put implicit confidence in letters of recommendation. As a general rule they are easily obtained. Few of us like to refuse so cheap a method of helping a poor man or a poor woman to earn a living. Employers are apt to reason that what costs little is worth little. Very frequently the waste-basket is the reservoir into which such epistles find their way.

Perhaps such letter-writing is more ancient than we often think. Just as in our day a Church has sometimes been divided and distracted by some "wolf in sheep's clothing," some missionary or travelling evangelist carrying the best of letters of endorsement; so exactly it was with the Corinthian Church. The Epistle from which the text is taken makes it clear that some professed Apostles of Christ, possibly impostors, but more likely men not sound in the faith, and destitute of discretion, had come to Corinth bearing testimonials that they were "in good standing" in some other Christian community. On

such letters they had been cordially received. But only to undo Paul's work. They had sown seeds of dissension which had produced a ripe harvest of sectarian strife.

The text grew directly out of this unhappy state of things. "Do we need," writes St. Paul, "as some do, letters of recommendation to you or for you?"

For who was responsible for the conditions that awaited the Apostle when he returns to Corinth after an absence on missionary work? Who had entered the spiritual garden that he had planted and watched over with tenderest care, so that now he finds it with plants uprooted, flowers broken from the stem, and trampled on by ruthless feet? Men who had come to Corinth with letters of recommendation from disciples at Jerusalem, or Antioch, or Rome!

No wonder that Paul speaks out in indignant protest against such testimonials. For himself he will have none of them. "Ye are our epistles," he declares, "written on our hearts, known and read of all men."

That is a plain lesson for both ministers and people. A preacher of Jesus Christ, a true shepherd of the Lord's flock, is going to be estimated not by testimonials from influential people, and least of all by the praise of the public press, but by the results appearing in the hearts and daily lives of his congregation. You say that the lesson is one that I ought not forget. Yes, beloved, and equally for you to remember. May God help both preacher and people to lay the lesson to heart!

I. A Letter Always Presupposes Something on Which It Is Written

Skeptics used to argue that Moses could not have been the author of the first five books of the Bible, because (they asserted) the art of writing was unknown in that infancy of the race. But the pick and spade have come to the rescue of God's Word. The ancient mounds and tombs of Egypt and Babylonia have proven beyond all controversy that men wrote with the use of alphabetic characters, not only before the days of Moses, but before those of Abraham. On what did they write? In the valley of the Euphrates and the Tigris, they engraved their records, and sent out letters to other lands on tablets of baked clay. In Egypt the stone coffins of the dead have given up to the investigator long rolls of papyrus, made from the reeds of the Nile, covered with inscriptions. But in St. Paul's day these ancient materials had been superseded by parchment made from the skins of animals. The Apostle must too have known and sometimes used the Roman fashion of writing with a sharp point of steel upon a tablet coated with wax. But when he comes to speak of his own letters of commendation, he does not allude to any of these materials. He says to the Christians at Corinth: "Ye are our epistle."

The only testimonials he needed were the men and women who had received the Gospel which he taught. Wherever they went they bore the impress of his Christian work; as the parchment bears the characters inscribed upon it.

Men were going to judge of Paul, and form their conclusions as to what he was, by his handwriting seen and read in their character and conduct. His

recommendatory letters were graven on the tablets of his disciples' hearts.

May I ask you to notice that the material on which St. Paul's letters of commendation were written was not a dead, but a living material.

The ancient Greeks found, and possibly some people in our day find, the most perfect specimens of manly beauty in a statue like the Apollo Belvedere. To some minds nothing could be more faultless in feature, more symmetrical in shape, or more graceful in pose. But even physical manhood has a far higher expression, where the form of a living man quivers with vitality, the cheek glows with colour, and the eye flashes with intelligence. The statue is dead stone. The man is alive.

Precisely that is the contrast which St. Paul brings out in this text. His commendatory letters, as a minister of Christ, were "not written on tablets of stone; but on the fleshy tablets of the heart."

Evidently his mind ran back to that day when Moses brought down the steep sides of Mount Sinai the tablets graven with the Ten Commandments. High honour was that of Moses, to be the bearer of God's Law, even though it were on tablets of stone. But it was a grander thing to be God's agent in writing His law upon the character and spiritual nature of living men. As a true Apostle and faithful minister of the Gospel, St. Paul says that the only commendation, the only testimonial worth his having, was to see Jesus Christ in the lives and hearts of those to whom Paul had preached salvation through the precious blood. What is all this to us?

Much every way; but for one thing, it teaches us what should be the effect of doctrinal truth. In our

day there has been an outcry against creeds. Some ecclesiastical bodies have rejected all definite statements of religious truth, as one flings away his old and worn-out clothes. I do not care to argue that point this morning. But this I feel bound to say: There are certain great truths which shine out in the Bible, as the constellations in the firmament. They will grow dim with age only when Orion and the Great Bear shall drop out of the sky. Woe to the mariner who dreams that the sun and moon and stars are too old and dim with age to be of use in determining his latitude and longitude on the trackless sea! Woe to the Christian who has begun to feel that the truths which God set in His Word from all eternity are too old and outworn to be his guides to glory. But those truths are to appear somewhere else than in the printed page. They are to be accepted in another way than by mere intellectual assent.

Those who have grown grey in the membership of Christ Church will cheerfully bear witness, that I have been an unswerving teacher of evangelical religion. You will testify that in these days of drifting opinions my beloved associate and I have been faithful to the fundamental truths embodied in the Apostles' and the Nicene Creeds. Perhaps you say that you honour your pastors' teaching in your firm adherence to the Gospel they have preached.

But, beloved, did you never read that in Christ's time the Pharisees wore the words of the Law written on a scrap of parchment, and bound as a fillet upon the forehead?

If your creed be in your Prayer Books only, it might as well be a dry piece of parchment worn upon your brow, or an epitaph carved on a tombstone.

Oh, give your pastors this letter of recommendation: Live your Creed! Let your doctrines be written on your daily walk and conversation. Then, with what unutterable joy can we say: "Ye are our epistle."

That on which we write our letters, has to be carefully prepared. Every paper-mill is witness to the processes through which the rags or the wood-pulp must pass before a word can be inscribed upon their product. In St. Paul's time the skins out of which parchment was made had to be subjected to long and costly preparation, and the reeds from the river had to be transformed into the papyrus-roll before a letter could be written.

That analogy holds good in spiritual things. "Ye are our epistle." God writes no letters on hearts unchanged. In the first Epistle to the Corinthians the Apostle gives a vivid picture of what had been the character of the members of that Christian community. He says: "No thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the Kingdom of God. And such," he adds, "were some of you; but ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

That made them living epistles for all the world to read. That is just as true to-day as twenty centuries ago.

Sometimes men and women complain that the Church does not set them at work. They are like the unemployed in our great cities. But God certainly has a use for every soul that accepts salvation. He would employ you as you employ the sheet on which you write a letter. God would send you people of Christ Church out into the busy life of Chicago

bearing a commendation of the Gospel preached from this pulpit. But before He puts you to that use, He must transform you by a process of preparation.

Do not mistake me! You are not to wait for some mysterious work of the Spirit. God stands ready to transform you to-day. But even the Almighty cannot make you a living epistle of Christ except you surrender that soul into His hands.

I remember a strange scene of our Civil War. Bishop Simpson of the Methodist Church addressed a vast crowd in behalf of our soldiers in the hospitals. His surpassing eloquence touched the hearts of his hearers until into the collection-plates were flung jewels and watches and flashing gems. But diamond rings and golden bracelets could bind up no wounds, and give no cordial to fever-parched lips. They had to be transmuted into money to do that. But, after all, the turning-point, the crisis, of that change was the surrender, the giving of them up!

Beloved, the older I grow in the Christian life, the more do I believe that in self-surrender—the absolute putting of our will into the hands of God that He may make us over—is the secret of our being fitted for His work here, and His glory hereafter. Is not this the day, the hour, to give yourself wholly, keeping nothing back, to Him who redeemed you by His blood?

II. Every Letter Involves the Idea of a Writer

We fling an anonymous letter into the waste-basket. The value of correspondence is always dependent on the question who is the writer. St. Paul says: "Ye are our epistle." But remember that he was referring to testimonials and letters of recom-

mendation. The Corinthian disciples were his letter not in the sense of authorship; but only in the sense that a letter is mine which endorses and bears witness to my character and work.

Who, then, was the writer of the letter which Paul rejoiced in? The answer is in the text itself: "Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the Living God."

Now see what a lesson there is here for every pastor and his flock!

For it makes this point clear: that no Church ever becomes a living testimony to the work of its minister, except its real Author is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Such a Church will not be composed merely of personal followers and admirers of their pastor.

Let us admit that it is a great thing for a minister to attach his people to himself, to gain their unbounded confidence and love. But if he stops there, if his only commendation lies in this—that he draws friends to himself, he is as hopeless a failure as if he repelled them by his unloving character or unfriendly manner. For—mark it well!—to be like a magnet among the particles of steel, is not the purpose for which God wants ministers. We need in these days to go back to the old-fashioned but Scriptural meaning of the word "minister." The Greek term means "a servant." Not, it is true, of men, except as Paul himself once wrote, "We are your servants"; but in what way? "For Jesus' sake." All through the New Testament preachers and pastors are called "ministers of Christ," that is, Christ's servants.

Do you engage a servant in order to draw his friends to your house? Do you employ a clerk that he may crowd your place of business with people

attached to him? When a Church is only a group of men and women drawn together by personal admiration of a mere man who occupies the pulpit, they constitute no such letter of commendation of his ministry, as the Church of Corinth was of the ministry of Paul. For they reveal the sad truth that he is not doing a minister's real work of attaching them to Christ his Master. The congregation may be written all over with its pastor's handwriting; but there is no signature of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You remember that story of Michael Angelo: that when engaged upon a statue, he wore a candle in the forefront of his cap, that his own shadow should not fall upon his work. The Church in which the shadow of the minister eclipses the light of Christ is no commendatory letter of its pastor.

But we need to study every word of this passage, if we would get the full blessing it was meant to convey. Clearly, while the letter is of Christ's authorship, there is also a place for human instrumentality. Note the expression: "Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us."

Is that hard to understand? I go into one of your business-offices, and find the head of the house engaged upon an important letter. But he does not touch pen to paper. The ideas are his. To him alone belong the modes of expression. The recipient of that communication recognizes beyond question from whom it came. But it was written by another's hand. An amanuensis, or secretary, did the work. Something like that was what Paul felt was his relation to the Church of Corinth. He had acted as the amanuensis, the secretary, for Christ the Great Head of the House. He had been graciously allowed to have a hand in the work.

Beloved, to the end of time it will be found that God works in that way. Human instrumentality in saving souls and in building up the Church is never going to be superseded. Religious literature, spiritual songs, books of devotion, all have their mission. But when Christ would so impress His religion upon souls, until they become His letter "read and known of all men," He does it by the ministry of the Gospel.

How, then, can a Church best commend its pastor? Not by praising his scholarship, his genius, his originality, or his eloquence. But by loyalty to the Word, in these days of popular Infidelity, and by the image of Jesus Christ reflected in its spirit and daily life.

That is an admirable photograph which you had taken the other day. But the man who produced it did not draw the outline, or put in the lights and shadows. The sun was the artist. But the picture did commend the photographer, because it showed that he had tried to fix the image which the sunlight had produced.

Your pastors want no other commendation than this: that upon the sensitive surface of this Church shall be impressed for all time to come the image of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But remember this: No Church can escape its destiny to be read like a letter by the searching eyes of the world.

When a man accepts the nomination of his party for some high office, like that of President of the United States, his letter of acceptance is always read by millions. Enemies as well as friends study every phrase. If there be a weak spot, it will be pointed out with unsparing severity. The writer is judged by his letter.

"Ye are our epistle." What will men and women who read you this week, say? May God's Holy Spirit so come upon you this day, that through the coming week, Christ may be read in every line of your life! Amen!

XIII

AN EMPLOYER AND HIS EMPLOYEE

"When Jesus heard it, He marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."

MATTHEW 8: 10.

FEW of the modern discoveries of Science have proved more useful to the human family than what are known as "the X-rays." For the twentieth-century surgeon actually looks into the inner recesses of his patient's body. He sees what was wholly invisible to his predecessor of a hundred, or even fifty years ago. So does the application of the Centurion to the Saviour for His healing power to be exerted in a servant's behalf, open a window to us, in the breast of a Roman officer, through which his character is revealed.

We never hear of him again in the pages of the New Testament. Like a ship spoken on a lonely sea, he never again crosses the track of our Bible-voyaging.

Yet the glimpse which we get reveals what was this man's inner nature.

I. YOU SEE HERE A MASTER'S AFFECTION FOR A SERVANT

"He had a servant," so runs the Gospel narrative, "who was dear to him."

Do not forget that this servant, as St. Luke's ac-

count makes clear, was a slave. His master was a Roman. We know from the Latin historians something of the way in which that conquering race regarded those whom poverty or war had reduced to bondage. The slave-owner had the power of life and death over his servant. The horses which drew his chariot, the dogs that served him in his hunting, had more claim upon his consideration and care, than the unhappy human being who tilled his broad acres, or served his table. Most of you know what Cicero was. Enlightened beyond most men of the age in which he lived, he taught a system of morals which resembled Christian faith as much as any shadow can be like the substance. He was a profound philosopher, and as an orator his eloquence stirs the blood even of the school-boys who read the words of a speaker dead two thousand years ago.

Yet there is on record an authentic letter of Cicero, in which, alluding to the death of an old and faithful servant, he feels obliged to apologize for even the mention of a matter so trifling!

Could there be a more striking contrast than is presented in the conduct of this Roman soldier? His whole soul is in the entreaty which he makes of Christ. Had it been his wife, or his son lying at death's door, he could hardly have presented his petition more urgently or appealed more earnestly to the pitiful heart of Christ.

Now, I do not purpose to limit the practical application of this feature of the Centurion to our relations to those who do the humbler and menial offices in our homes. If I am in the employ of some one else, then I am that man's servant. For, look at it in whatever light I please, the fact remains that I agree to serve him, no matter in what capacity.

I may be the salesman behind his counter; the counsellor who threads for him the mazy labyrinths of the law; the cook who prepares his food; or the minister who is his "servant for Jesus' sake." But as his servant, I have a claim upon his affectionate regard. The fact that the person whom you employ is dependent upon you demands something of the feeling which this Centurion entertained for his servant. A man loves his wife or his child with a deeper affection, because they are dependent upon the toil of his busy brain or strong arm. But that sort of dependence is not confined to the sharers of one's flesh and blood. In times like these, when this city, and every other centre of business and manufacture, sees thousands of men and women eager to earn their bread; but, like the labourers in our Lord's parable, "standing all the day idle because no man hath hired them," we ought to get a clearer vision of the pitiful dependence existing in our modern social relations.

Many of you, travelling to the Pacific Coast, have been filled with a sort of awe, as your train crept along the rocky shelf of the Royal Gorge in the Colorado mountains. To look down into the abysmal depths over which you seem to hang, may well test the steadiest nerves. But I know a man, then little more than a boy, who, when that railway line was first surveyed, was suspended by his fellow civil engineers, as they lowered him down the face of that tremendous precipice!

Can you conceive of more anxious solicitude, of greater intensity of interest than that with which those men above held that rope? What if their grip should relax, their strength give out? What if

the strands should be worn through by the saw-tooth edges of projecting rocks?

O beloved, in the amazing complications of our twentieth-century life, exactly such dependence is daily exhibited in the relations of the toiling man and woman to him who furnishes or withholds employment. A mercantile house reduces its force. A firm of contractors discharges a dozen labourers whom it can no longer use with profit. A factory shuts down its activities until business shall improve. I do not claim that such economies can be avoided. But I do say that when we face the fact that in almost every instance it means the snapping of the rope on which hangs the very life of men and women and little children, the utter dependence of such people upon those who constitute the employing class ought to awaken something like the interest and sympathy which that Roman Centurion felt, as he found his servant on the verge of dying.

There is another reason why the employer should feel a responsibility for those whom he has in his service. An employee cannot help being influenced for good or evil, by the example of his employer. He sees it at close range. He is like one who goes behind the scenes, and gets a revelation of the ropes and pulleys which control the machinery of life. Whatever that life may be, a life of greed or generosity, of rudeness or courtesy, of transparent truth or mean deception, it is bound to tell upon the character of those who work under your direction. I say to business men that it is the very nature of your relation to your employees, that seeing, as they must, the inside of your business life, they are going to be influenced by your example. I say to every woman who directs a household that your housemaid knows

just what you are, far better than your society friends, or your minister can know you. Are you interested to have your example a light to those who know you best?

II. But Observe This Centurion's Humility

The tropics produce gigantic vegetation and gorgeous flowers. But violets belong to our northern lands. There are splendid virtues developed in a military life. Fidelity to duty; patriotism which knows no sacrifice too great; the dashing courage which flings life away in wild rush upon artillery, belching fire and death; the calm, unflinching, holding of Round Top, or Cemetery Hill, when headlong daring was of no avail; these are the qualities which we look for in the soldier. They are the splendid flowers that blossom from the soil of War.

But the violet of Humility rarely springs from the blood-soaked field of battle. It does not seem natural that what the Bible calls "humbleness of mind" should be found among the virtues of the soldier. Somebody said the other day that in our parks robins have appeared before their time. You may be glad of their cheery song, but it takes you by surprise.

Remember that this Centurion was the representative of Rome's imperial dignity and illimitable power. It does not make us Americans more humble to be aware that our Republic covers the continent from ocean to ocean, and holds in its grasp the islands of the sea. The Roman in the first years of the Christian era was not the man in whose heart you would expect to find humility. A Roman might indeed cringe at the feet of some fellow-Roman whose rank or wealth commanded such servility. But the

same obsequious Roman would look down from a height of superlative arrogance, when he came into contact with a Jew. In his eyes the Hebrew was "the offscourings of the earth." He hated that turbulent race with a loathing only surpassed by his infinite contempt.

Then look on this marvellous picture! A Roman military officer comes into the presence of a Jew and says: "I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come under my roof."

What a lesson for you and me! If this hour the peasant-prophet of Galilee were to enter this Church, and in His old guise of a homeless wandering carpenter, take His place in this pulpit, would we feel that we were unworthy to have Him here? I gravely doubt it. For the prevailing spirit of our time is not so much a bitter opposition to the Gospel as a lofty scorn of its claims. Science makes some supposed discovery to-day which contradicts its discoveries of last year; but which is heralded abroad as a refutation of the religion of Jesus. As Kipling phrases it in his "Recessional," we are "drunk with power."

The mighty forces of wealth, of trade, of military armaments, and civil government, and the mastery of the hitherto hidden mysteries of Nature, have intoxicated mankind. Like that other Roman soldier, Pilate, the great world, swollen with pride, faces One who wears a mocking robe of royal purple, whose back is scarred with scourging, whose head is crowned with thorns, and this Pilate of the twentieth century, with curling lip and tone of scorn, asks: "Art Thou then a King?"

The hideous shambles for the slaughter of men, across the sea, ought to teach the world humility.

"It is the breakdown of Christianity," cry the hooting owls of unbelief. Far from it! Not a nation of those whose millions are murdering each other that has not substituted modern civilization and culture for Jesus Christ; and civilization without Christ has proved a bridge with its timbers sawn asunder.

Turn a moment from national to individual life!

When Leonardo da Vinci had wrought his masterpiece, "The Baptism of St. John," among the multitudes who thronged to see it was the aged master from whom Leonardo had learned the rudiments of Art. The old man gazed on the glowing canvas as if transfixed; then turned away, an ashen pallor on his face. "I have seen the work of God," he said; "I paint no more!"

Such used to be the conviction of sin. To see the work of Christ and the character of Christ made men's self-righteousness shrivel, as if touched by fire. Why is it that there is so rarely such overwhelming consciousness of the unworthiness of what we are, the unworthiness of what we have done?

Why do not sinful souls cry out with Job: "I have seen God, and abhor myself"? Why have we no Isaiahs nowadays, stricken with the thought: "Woe is me! for I am a man of unclean lips, and mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!"

Where now are the men like Peter, seeing in Jesus "God manifest in the flesh," and shrinking from His holiness and glory: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" How comes it to pass that even in our revivals of religion there is such a lack of deep consciousness of personal sinfulness?

Is it not time to ask ourselves: "Have we really come face to face with Jesus? Have we contrasted ourselves with His holiness?"

Let us to-day learn from this Roman soldier to say from the heart: "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come under my roof"!

III. I Have Left Myself but a Moment to Speak of What Is, After All, the Greatest Lesson Which This Centurion Teaches Us—His Unhesitating Faith

We all value the praise of even our fellow-men. I can understand how those Chicago firemen felt when, week before last, medals of honour were given them for heroism in saving imperilled lives.

But how insignificant it all seems compared with the joy of being praised by Jesus Christ. And it was none other who said of this Roman captain: "I have not seen so great faith—no, not in Israel." Let us grasp clearly the connection of ideas here. What did this Centurion do or say, which was proof to the Saviour of such faith as He had never found before? This was a military man. His life-training had been under the stern discipline of the Roman army. As to-day, across the sea, men hurl themselves upon a wall of bristling bayonets, or where the machine-guns reap their awful harvest, indifferent to everything but their orders; so in the legions of imperial Rome the vital breath of the Roman soldier was obedience to orders.

I can read between the lines the thought which was only half-expressed in that which he said to Jesus: "I exercise and obey authority. When I give an order, my soldiers and my servant alike fly to do my bidding. So wait the powers of Nature, so wait disease and recovery, life and death, upon the commands of this incarnate God! He has no need to

enter my unworthy dwelling. Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed!"

Christian, have you such faith in the word of Jesus? You came here this morning, staggering beneath a burden. You are worrying over your business, your health, your family, your prospects. Christ has spoken to you in this house. Did you hear His word? "Cast thy burden on the Lord, and He will sustain thee." "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Can you trust that word?

My brother, my sister, outside Christ's fold, the Good Shepherd has spoken a word to you to-day: "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." Have you come?

XIV

THE SPIRITUALISM OF CHRIST

"Likewise, I say unto you, There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

LUKE 15: 10.

THERE are Christians who ask the question: "Can any good come out of the Nazareth of controversy in religion?" Such Christians forget that the ministry of Jesus Christ was a succession of stormy conflicts.

This text which I have chosen is like the light which flashes from the contact of flint and steel. It would never have blazed out, but for the collision of controversy. For when publicans and sinners flocked to hear the message which Jesus spoke, the Pharisees leaped to the conclusion that He was not their long-looked-for Messiah, nor even a good man, because such people were attracted by Him.

It is one of the strange anomalies of human history, that these Scribes and Pharisees should have so completely failed to recognize Him. Their trained intelligence and education in the Law and the Prophets, their devotion of their lives to the study of their sacred Scriptures, ought to have led them to recognize in Jesus of Nazareth "Him of whom Moses and the prophets did write." Experts as they were in the Old Testament, we should expect of them something of the quick discernment with which in our day a bank-teller recognizes the genuine bill,

and flings out the counterfeit with unerring certainty and lightning-like swiftness.

But while these scholarly, learned, and religious teachers saw in the Lord Jesus only an impostor and deceiver of the people, the ignorant and sin-laden souls recognized Him as a Saviour sent of God. The reason is not far to seek.

Out on our far western plains, so I have been told, in bitter winters like this, the cattle dig down through the crusted snow, and find the buried grass. Starvation quickens their instinct into intelligence. Their ravening hunger tells them where food may be found.

So came publicans and outcasts to Christ. In the desperate hunger of the soul, they recognized Him as their Saviour, though He was disguised as a peasant of Galilee. They felt, as I believe that some of us do, that their highest claim upon Christ was that they were sinners, and it was sinners whom He came to save.

The Pharisees felt no such necessity. Were they not "just men, who needed no repentance"? But Jesus said of them, "the very publicans and harlots enter into the Kingdom before you."

I have seen a searchlight fling its illumination over the darkness of the sea. So did the Saviour flash the light of illustration upon the truth that He was sent to "save that which was lost." The shepherd's one sheep out of his hundred, brought back from straying; the woman's one piece of silver out of her ten, searched for and found; the Prodigal coming back repentant to his father's house; each wakened a gladness which thrills the hearts of those who have lost, but have found again. Such joy, says our Lord, would make the Church on earth an anticipation, a foretaste of Heaven: "Likewise I say unto you, there

is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth."

I. The Text Gives Us a Glimpse of the Spirit-World

Men have, and always have had, an insatiable desire to see what is behind the curtain which parts the material from the spiritual world. Many years ago, on one of the boulevards of Paris, I found a crowd blocking the space before the window of a jeweller's shop. Through the plate-glass appeared the dial and hands of a clock. But though the pointers, as they moved, indicated the time with unfailing accuracy, no mechanism could be seen. And the ever-increasing curiosity of the passers-by made them bend their necks in the effort to discover what was the mysterious power back of the dial-plate.

Human history is a good deal like the movement of the hands over the face of a timekeeper. We readily see the outward phenomena. But they do not wholly satisfy our inquisitive nature. What lies back of the exterior and visible? There must be, so most sane minds reason, there must be a world of spirits, unseen, but working the machinery of life on earth. No wonder that the next question is: "What is that world like?"

Now when we attempt to answer a query like that, we come to act like a spider that has reached a chasm over which there is no bridge. Did you ever see one of those insects puzzled at such an abyss in its path? It hurries up and down, and here and there, in hot haste; but always finds itself on the same side of the yawning gulf.

But by and by it stops as if it were thinking. Then

it spins out of itself a silken thread, and flings it to the winds to carry it over to the other side. So do men try to bridge the gap between the two worlds. But the filament which they would have as the beginning of the structure is always a thought drawn out of their own conjectures, and wafted over by the winds of their own imagination.

That is the system known as Spiritualism. It is the human fancy run mad.

With that tissue of delusion and folly I have nothing to do this morning. But I do want to speak of what, for lack of a better name, may be called, with all reverence, "the Spiritualism of Jesus Christ."

My most trustworthy information about some land which I have never visited must be that derived from a native of that country, who has spent his life in the region where he was born.

Remember that Jesus Christ declared: "I came down from heaven." "I know whence I came, and whither I go." "I proceeded and came forth from God." In His last prayer for His disciples, He speaks of "the glory which I had with Thee before the world was."

The only testimony about the spiritual world, that is worth having, is the testimony of the co-eternal Son of God. And what makes this text so wonderful is that it contains the witness of Jesus Christ as to what heaven is. He opens a window through which we may get at least a glimpse of what is going on in the world of God's glory. What does the text reveal to us? Let us see.

If I want to discover the key to a man's character, I must find out what are the things which make him glad.

When the light of a great joy illumines a heart

of man or woman, it is like the kindling of an electric light in a dark room. It shows what is in that heart. It searches out the springs of motive.

I somewhere have read of a cattle-herder who fell into the hands of the Arizona Apaches. You know an Indian's face is as stolid as that of the Sphinx. It rarely becomes expressive of any emotion. But that day every warrior was quivering with delight. It was such a joy to torture their wretched and helpless victim, that the stern faces relaxed, and they laughed in an esctasy of pleasure. Do you know of any key that unlocks the nature of a savage, like that which gives him joy?

Come back with me to this Church. Somewhere in the congregation is one whose heart is a cup brimming with the wine of gladness. For last night he found a household in the last stages of destitution. But for him, there would be no fire upon that hearth, no food upon the table, no shelter for even the baby at its mother's breast. Their benefactor may himself be poor. The help he gave was given with sacrifice and self-denial. But as he thinks of the grateful expressions of those he comforted, and above all that they could say, a blessed voice: "Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these, ye did it unto me," his soul sings like a skylark for joy. Could anything show more clearly what that man is, than that which has made him glad?

Am I not right, when I say that the Saviour has in this text drawn aside the veil between our world and that beyond, when He lets us see what causes gladness among the inhabitants of Heaven? Somehow, we are admitted to a privilege such as Christ gave to St. John on the island of Patmos: "Behold, a door was opened in Heaven"! For through that

open door comes the voice of great gladness: "There is joy among the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

I pray that both minister and people may realize how intensely practical is the lesson which Christ is teaching us in this glimpse into the world we have not yet seen. For, it at once suggests a searching inquiry: "Are we professing Christians in sympathy with what makes Heaven a place of joy?"

If one of us were on the eve of crossing the Atlantic, or even of exchanging our Chicago winter for the balmy air of Southern California, we would make our preparations to conform with the climate and environment which we expect to find. Each of us is anticipating an eternal home in glory. But does my joy chord with the music which gladdens Heaven? Does yours? If to-day we were taken up like Enoch or Elijah to join the choirs above, would not that which makes up our joy, strike upon the ears of Christ and His angels with a discordant note?

What is the spiritual, the religious joy of the average member of the Church? Of course, we rejoice in everything which indicates the prosperity of Christ's Kingdom. Does any heart beat with a more gladsome thrill than yours and mine, when some blessing falls like the dew upon our own branch of God's great family on earth? Who felt a keener delight than we when a generous offering lifted the burden of our Church?

If your minister were suddenly to be gifted with a power he does not possess, and preach sermons which the world would applaud, and the newspapers herald with great headlines, would anybody evince a more rapturous joy than you?

If some rich and generous Christian should this

week take a pew in our Church, and transfer to us and our work the influence of his wealth and social position, would it not evoke a welcoming joy in our heart?

God forbid that I should criticise such rejoicing. We ought to love our own Church as a true man loves his home. Our own individual success and prosperity ought not to be as dear to us as that of the spiritual home where Christ has blessed us.

But listen to this text! In it, Heaven's bells are chiming, and Heaven's harps ringing! The Celestial City is ablaze with glad illumination! For, one night into our mid-week meeting there came a poor soul who was in the depths of sin, yet troubled with an uneasy conscience. Somehow the message was one which God meant for him. It touched his heart like the voice of his dead mother. It spoke of pardon and peace, through Christ's blood, to even such as he! That night he came to the Cross. Did you hear of it? Probably not. You may not have been there that evening.

But, O beloved, the angels did hear. They were there. And "there was joy in the presence of the angels of God, over that one sinner that repented."

II. In Conclusion, Observe that the Angels' Joy Is over a Single Repenting Sinner

I firmly believe that the weakness of much religion in our day is its persistence in dealing with men and women in the mass.

You dropped on the street a copper coin. Perhaps you stooped down and tried to recover it. But you spent little time in the search. If there had been a hundred, or even a dozen of them, it would have

been worth your while to devote time and effort to gather them up.

Do we not reason thus in regard to souls? We love a crowd. The cry of modern Christianity is: "How shall we reach the masses?"

The underlying idea of a revival of religion is that of a spiritual earthquake, shaking a whole city at a time. Far be it from me to condemn such methods. I would welcome such a mighty awakening as our sister-city of Philadelphia is experiencing to-day. I would "rejoice with joy unspeakable," if day and evening a vast tabernacle proved too small for the crowd who were seeking salvation. I pray God that "some droppings" of these "showers of blessing" may fall even on Chicago. But I cannot forget that my Master did not despise preaching to an auditory of one, when Nicodemus came to Him at dead of night, and the sinful woman at Jacob's well found in Him the Saviour of her soul. Are we not, in our burning zeal to save the multitude, forgetting this text: "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents"?

It is God's way of teaching us who confess Christ's religion, the unspeakable value of one soul! I have seen in the Tower of London the Koh-i-noor diamond. It is protected behind plates of glass, and guarded within bars of steel, and ancient walls of stone. And all this for one solitary gem. It is too priceless to be trifled with. Yet, were the Koh-i-noor dropped into the sea, no angel would weep. And if restored no angel would rejoice.

But here is the word of Jesus Christ Himself: "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents."

Fellow-Christian, have you estimated in the light

of this declaration the worth in the eyes of God of even one of the souls, who know not your Saviour, yet are in daily intercourse with you? What are you doing in personal work to lead such souls to repent, and accept Christ?

I dare not end this sermon and speak no word to those who might this day waken a fresh joy "in the presence of the angels of God." There are some in this congregation, who know that the most momentous question which the human mind can entertain is with them an unsettled question.

Were it not the question which overtops all others, God would have found a less costly way to save a wandering soul. If in God's universe there are beings who know what it cost to redeem even one sinner, it is those whom the Epistle to the Hebrews calls "an innumerable company of angels."

They know that all that God's wisdom could contrive, all that His power could do, and all that His love could sacrifice, was freely given to the work of redeeming a soul. Choirs of angels sang their carols when the eternal Son of God humbled Himself to be born of woman! When, in order that He might know our conflicts, He fought and won the battle with the Tempter, it was angels who came and "ministered to Him." While Peter and James and John slept amidst His awful agony in Gethsemane, "an angel"—says St. Luke—"appeared unto Him strengthening Him."

Did not their invisible legions, whose aid Christ Himself declared He could call to crush His murderers, hover, rank upon rank, over the scoffing, the scourging, and the crucifying?

Surely they know the tremendous cost of a soul's salvation! They know that God Himself can do no

more. They know that it is a finished work, and that "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin."

No wonder that they take an all-absorbing interest in your heeding the appeal I make to you to-day. You, and you alone, can set Heaven's harps to ringing with the music of joy. O repent, believe on Jesus, and a loving Father shall say to the angels who wait for you: "It was meet that we should make merry and be glad, for this my son was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found."

XV

HEARERS AND DOERS

> *"For if any man be a hearer of the Word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was."*
>
> JAMES 1:23, 24.

MARTIN LUTHER is said to have questioned the inspiration of the Epistle of St. James. It only proves a well-known historic fact, that the leaders of any great movement like the Reformation are apt to be one-sided in their judgments.

After our Revolutionary War, there were men who felt that the liberty, bought by such sacrifices as they had offered, could not be carried too far. Revolting against everything British, they saw in Congress only a cheap imitation of the English Parliament. They wanted no President, lest he should become a monarch. They sneered at Washington as an aristocrat, and demanded a democracy on the lines of the French Revolution. In one word, they were patriots, who, reacting against tyranny, forgot that freedom unregulated by law is a curse more terrible than despotism.

In something the same way, Luther was moved by the great principle of the New Testament, Justification by Faith. He had found peace with God, not in his own imperfect works, but in the finished work of

Jesus on the Cross. Therefore he rushed to the extreme of suspicion of St. James's exhortations to good works, as a germ of the bondage which had once made him the slave of the Roman Church.

But the calm judgment of Protestant Christianity has reversed that of Luther.

St. James was simply the complement of St. Paul; as one oar of a boat balances the other. Faith in Christ as the instrument of the believer's peace, and the holy life which proves that faith to be genuine, are the two hemispheres of a fully rounded globe. Either, without the other, is a one-sided and ill-balanced religion.

Hence this letter of St. James becomes to the Christian what a chemical test is to the man of science. Applied to faith in Christ, it reveals its real character.

When I was a youth, the country was flooded with all sorts of paper currency. But in the counting-room of every business house was to be found a publication called "The Counterfeit Detector." Such is this Epistle of James. It searches out and detects the fraudulent imitations of a genuine faith in Christ.

The text is an example. It unerringly indicates the difference between the hearing ear and the doing hand. Let us prayerfully test ourselves by the rule which is here laid down.

I. First, then, St. James Points Out the Difference Between Hearers and Doers, in the Kind of Look Which They Give to the Mirror of the Gospel

Do not lose the force of the illustration which the text employs. The Word of God is a mirror. Its

primary purpose was not to reveal Man to himself, but to be a revelation of what God is. If we would know His character, we shall learn it by looking into His Word. Nevertheless in doing so, we discover by contrast what we are. That is precisely what St. James had in view. Men who study the Bible get a vision of Christ; but also learn by contrast how selfish and unlike Christ they themselves are.

Our English translation does not convey all the force of this reference to the mirrors of St. James's day. They were not, as are ours, of silvered glass. What our English Bible calls "looking-glasses" were highly polished plates of steel or copper.

We can easily see that such a reflecting surface would give back an imperfect likeness of the face that looked into it. The picture would be vague, and the reflection clouded and dim. Consequently if one would get a satisfactory idea of his real appearance from one of these metal mirrors, he must give something more than a careless glance. He must look with scrutinizing intensity. I have often caught a glimpse of my own figure, as I passed a plate-glass window. Yet it left no distinct idea or impression of what sort of a man I was. If I really desired to find out how I looked, it would be indispensable that I pause in my walk, and carefully examine the shadow which I had flung upon the glass.

The reason why I received so imperfect and fleeting an impression was simply because I was not deeply absorbed or interested in my own personal appearance. How clearly does such an illustration bring out the meaning of this text!

The difference between hearers and doers of the Word lies in the spirit and disposition with which they read the Bible, or listen to the spoken Gospel,

I fear that very few of those who now and then read a chapter of God's Word, or listen with respect to its exposition from the pulpit, can be said to be absorbed in the truths which it reveals.

I recall once visiting the Dresden Gallery of Art. I saw hundreds of paintings famous throughout the world. Yet to-day I could not give you any intelligible description of them. They did not rouse my enthusiasm, or stamp themselves upon my memory. But the one picture which I went there to see, the Sistine Madonna of Raphael, I can tell you all about. It will stay with me while I live.

Now just such a difference is suggested by this text. It speaks of one "beholding his natural face in a mirror."

The Greek word for "beholding" is one which means "glancing at," "getting a glimpse of."

But when, a little further on, St. James refers to the man whose hearing of God's Word leads him to do it, he chooses a term which signifies a close attention, an absorbing study, and an intense desire to see what is there. When therefore the question is asked, as it so often is, why so many "hearers" are not "doers," the answer is right here. St. James lived and died long before our modern science, which claims to find a reason for everything under the sun, was born. But true Christian philosopher as he was, he struck the nail squarely on the head, when he wrote the words of the text.

Do not say that I am forgetting the grievous faults and painful weaknesses of us preachers. But that is not the primary trouble. It lies deeper. It lies in the failure to come to God's House with a desire, not to be gratified with eloquence, or amused by interesting discourse, but to get a message from God.

We "glance" at the reflection in the mirror; but fail to "look into" the perfect "law of liberty."

There is a well-known picture which represents Columbus, as he caught the first glimpse of a new world. Around him, on the deck of his caravel, lay a group of sleeping sailors. The greatest event in modern history was nothing to them. But in the night stood the great admiral, his hand above his forehead, his whole soul revealed in his eager eyes. On the distant shore he had discovered a moving light.

Beloved, let us come to the hearing of God's message, in the spirit of Columbus, not that of his drowsy and indifferent comrades.

II. Again, St. James Points Out a Difference Between Hearers and Doers of the Word, in the Time Which They Give to the Message of the Gospel

Photography in our day has made a vast advance over the achievements of Daguerre. We have learned to take instantaneous photographs. "In the twinkling of an eye" an impression is made which endures.

I know of no analogy to that process in the sphere of Christianity. The old rule of Isaiah holds good to-day, as it did two thousand years ago: "Precept must be upon precept, and line upon line." Spiritual and eternal things demand time. Do not hurry in your dealing with the Holy Spirit.

St. James puts his finger on the weak spot of those whom he styles "hearers only," when he refers to the haste with which they behold themselves in the mirror of God's Word.

The glance of such a man is superficial. But it is something more. It is very brief: "He goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was."

Such a man only proves a universal law. The thing which impresses us, so that it fixes itself permanently in the memory, and reproduces itself in our life and character, is almost invariably that to which we have given time.

I presume that some of you will visit the Panama Exposition in San Francisco. I do not claim to be a prophet; but I venture to say beforehand that when you come back, and are questioned by your friends or family about the great fair, of some departments you will be unable to tell them anything at all. They touched your mind as lightly as a snowflake touches the surface of the sea. They melted into nothingness, as soon as they had vanished from your sight. But, on the other hand, some departments will stamp their exhibits on your memory with as vivid and sharply-defined an impression as the engraving on a seal. You will assimilate them as you do your daily food. They will become part of your intellectual life. But I am confident that those departments are the ones to which you shall give time. You will not glance at them, and then "go your way."

You know that that rule is a universal law. The business which prospers, the profession which brings distinction, the literary work which stands the test of time, the painting or statue which gives the artist an immortal name, is never the product of some hasty moment. It is the result of taking time. We talk about a sudden flash of the fire of genius. If there be any such, it is like a straw-stack struck by lightning. The fire dies out almost at its birth. All his-

tory, all biography, bear witness that whatever endures has taken time for its preparation.

Now apply this rule to the realm of religion. Are not your life and mine like a crowded exposition? Under its spreading roof are various departments. There is a department of business, of recreation, of mental cultivation, and even of rest in sleep. Surely, none who hear me will deny that there is a department, or ought to be, of spiritual training.

Let us be honest! We devote time to all the others. What share of the day, week, year, do we give to this last department?

We glance through its ever-open door, catch perhaps some glimpse of what it reveals, then "go our way"!

Last spring, travelling in Ohio, I could see the farm-hands planting corn. The day was sultry, the sun hot, and wide acres were yet to be covered. But how patiently they kept at it! Why should they not? They were looking forward to the autumn and the harvest. They knew that the Medes and Persians had no more irrepealable law than this: "According as a man soweth, so shall he also reap." No wonder that they gave time ungrudgingly.

What of the harvest of the Word of God? What are you looking forward to, "when time shall be no more"? Eternal ages of holiness, happiness, and unending life. Has any soul a right to expect such a harvest, who will not give time to the sowing?

When I listen on Sunday morning for thirty minutes to a sermon; give Sunday afternoon to recreation, and then hardly open my Bible, or take time for prayer, during the week, what sort of sowing is this, for ripe sheaves and the glad harvest-home through Eternity's endless cycles?

Believe me, dear friends, it is this inadequate time given to things unseen as yet, but eternal, which creates so many "hearers, but not doers of the Word."

I know precisely what your answer is: "Who can give time to religion, in the stress of life in such a city of Chicago? The treadmill of competition keeps us ever on the march. There is no let-up of the pressure. We must give our time to our business, or go under."

Now to this plausible plea I have three answers. They shall be so concise that you can fix them in your memory. May the Holy Spirit fix them in your conscience!

First: God has recognized the pressure of your cares, and consequently has given you one seventh of your time for your soul's welfare. Can you honestly say that you do give that day up to the purpose for which God gave it to you?

Secondly: Christ had such miraculous power, that He created in a desert-place enough food to feed five thousand people. Yet He said to His disciples: "Gather up the fragments, that nothing be lost." Your business-sense tells you that habits of systematic economy are worth more than a fortune dropping like a ripe apple into your hands. With all the pressure on your time, are there no moments in your days given to the club, to friendly but purposeless gossip, to wading through a newspaper, which could be economized for sowing the seed of the spiritual harvest?

Thirdly: I remember that my associate a few Sundays ago preached upon putting "first things first." Do you never take time, even when busiest, for a duty which seems supreme?

Not long ago, a message came to me from one who in desperate illness sought my counsel and prayer. My sermon was unfinished. My correspondence was in arrears. Books were waiting to be consulted. Sunday was at hand. The stress was almost more than I could bear. Yet from every duty, I turned to that one, which before God, I saw to be supreme. I took time when I could not afford it. Beloved, is there any work, any business, any use of time, as supreme as making sure that my soul is "right with God"?

My sermon is ended. In its camera have you caught a glimpse of "what manner of man you are"? Take the next step. Develop the picture! The Holy Ghost waits to help you. I pray you, devote what is left of this day to that supreme work!

XVI

HOW THE CHRISTIAN SHOULD FORGIVE

"Forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you."
EPHESIANS 4:32.

HAVE you ever heard of the utilitarian philosophy? Its foundation was the idea that all things are to be estimated by their value to the human family. We are to look at the universe very much as the South Sea islander regards the palm-tree. He has no thought for its beauty. Its stately grace and its feathery foliage do not lead his mind "up through Nature to Nature's God." But it gives him food with little or no tillage. It yields the oil that lights his hut, and anoints his supple limbs. He weaves his scanty clothing from the fibre of its bark. The roof that shelters him is of the palm-tree leaves. The sails and cordage of his tiny ship are made of the same material. The only thought with which it inspires him is its usefulness.

Am I overstating the fact, when I say that this strange philosophy is often applied to the religion of Jesus Christ? There are a great many people who feel that Christianity must be preserved at any cost. Not because it is of God. Not for the intrinsic beauty of its precepts. Not on account of its everlasting truth. Its utility is that which enlists their support and defence. It sustains good morals. It

stands for the just authority of constituted governments. It promotes harmony in the family, and frowns upon disorder.

In a word, Christianity is a stream whose onflowing current irrigates the earth, turns the wheels of the world's mills, and keeps in motion the machinery on which prosperity depends.

This principle of utility is carried into the details of Christian duties. Take the thought of this text: A spirit of forgiveness is indispensable to the peaceable maintenance of society. Just in proportion as we hold a grudge against our fellow-man, we are like him who puts a live coal into the heart of a haystack.

This idea of the usefulness of a gentle and forgiving nature is constantly urged upon us; because without it life in community with others would be wellnigh impossible.

Now the remarkable thing is that the Bible nowhere teaches a forgiving spirit, on the ground of its value to social life.

When the Saviour, in the Sermon on the Mount, commanded us to pray for our enemies, on what basis did He put it? Not because of its usefulness; but because it would prove that we are the children of our Father in Heaven: "for He maketh His sun to shine on the evil and the good."

So does this text develop the ground and basis of forgiving. We are to forgive, "even as God hath forgiven us." Well; how did God forgive us?

I. God Forgave Us Freely

The Governor of every state is persistently plied with petitions for the pardon of offenders against the

law. Coming, as they do, from widely different sources, and couched in different language, they yet have one feature in common. They base their plea upon "the previous good conduct" of the prisoner, and his excellent behaviour during the term of his incarceration. The signers of such a petition realize that the executive has no power under the law to pardon, without something on the part of the offender by which he has earned his acquittal. The idea never enters the head of a petitioner that a prisoner can be pardoned freely.

My fellow-communicant, you who, at the Lord's Table to-day, recall the way in which you were pardoned, how different it is from the way in which the doors of a penitentiary are flung open to send a prisoner out!

There is no joy on earth like that which faith gives to the believer. To lie down at night with the blessed assurance that his sins are buried past all resurrection, to hear the voice of God Himself declare: "There is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus," that is the heritage of His people. But tell me, what did you or I ever pay for such forgiveness?

Did our years of ingratitude and stolid indifference earn our pardon? Did any stripes of ours atone for our sins? Are there the scars of wounds in our hands or feet, or our souls, which deserved the compassion of a holy God?

Beloved, so far as we were concerned, forgiveness was as free as the air we breathe.

Listen to this text! That is the model for our forgiving of those who have done us wrong. We are to forgive, "even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us."

Let us ask ourselves, as we recall wrong-doers whom we have forgiven, did we follow this pattern? Did we forgive freely? This is no unmeaning searching of our memory. For it is human nature to limit our exercise of pardon by certain hard conditions. If my brother will humiliate himself, and will conform to my ideas of what an offender ought to do, then, when all my requirements are fulfilled, I shall be willing to forgive him.

I once heard a sermon on this subject, if not on this text, which laid down the principle that no one ought to expect us to forgive until the offender had come to us and asked pardon for the wrong that he had done.

Probably the preacher did not mean to convey the idea that we were to keep the fires of bitterness and wrath burning in our hearts, until our neighbour had fallen at our feet, and professed to repent. But such was the impression he produced. Oh, how far was such teaching from the heavenly model!

Is forgiveness the saying with the lips, "I forgive," or is it the nurturing in our hearts of a spirit of loving-kindness toward him with whom we have been offended?

Forgiveness is not the mere touching of the keys to make them vocal with the notes of "peace, good-will to men." It is keeping the soul in tune with the spirit of charity.

I once knew a poor girl who did not dare to face the father on whose good name she had brought disgrace. "He never will forgive me," was her despairing cry. But when a good woman sought the father, and told him that his child's one yearning was for his forgiveness, the tears filled his eyes, and he said: "That is what I have been praying for."

His forgiveness was in his heart, before it was on his lips. That is the spirit of our heavenly Father, and such ought to be ours. Here is the model after which our forgiving should be patterned. If any would be reconciled to us, it should be like the touch of a drill to a hidden reservoir impatient to gush out with water.

II. God's Forgiving Is Not only Free, but Full

After our great Civil War, the Government proclaimed a general amnesty to those who for four years had been arrayed against it. Do you remember that there were some of the leaders excepted by name? The generosity of the North did not for many years rise to the height of welcoming back all who had taken up arms on the side of the South.

When God proclaims amnesty to you and me, through the precious blood of Jesus, which of all our sins does He except from the scope of His mercy? What guilt is that, which has burned its awful characters so deep into the tablets of the Judgment records, that even the sacrifice of the Cross cannot blot it out?

I cannot answer that startling question. But God Himself has answered it. Listen! "He shall redeem Israel," says the Psalmist, "from all his sins." Hear again: "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Did you hear the triumphant anthem of the New Testament: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." What exception is there to this declaration of pardon: "Having forgiven you all trespasses . . . nailing them to His Cross"?

"He is able to save to the uttermost them who come unto God through Him."

Beloved, that is the model of forgiving which God has set before you and me. Are there any limits set to its fulness?

Think for a moment of our way of forgiving. In settling the affairs of some unsuccessful business house, there are often some "preferred creditors," whose claims are satisfied before all others. The rest must content themselves with such remnants of the property as may be left.

That is the precise spirit of men's forgiving. To some who have wronged us we are willing to be reconciled. But there are others who have to wait till we get ready to forgive them. "That is human nature," you say. Yes; so it is. But human nature, unchanged by the Holy Spirit, is not the pattern we Christians are to follow. We are to follow "the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness." We are to forgive, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven us. God never writes a receipt "on account." It is always "a receipt in full." Oh, for more of this spirit in us! It is the very essence of Christlike character. But how much there is of a kind of forgiving flung to an offender, as we throw a bone to a dog, with no love or gentleness in the act!

As another has well said, "We take one who has wronged us, and set him down before the blowpipe of our indignation, and burn his fault into him; and when we have sufficiently kneaded him with our fiery fists, then we forgive him." Surely this was not Christ's way with us.

III. God's Forgiving Was a Costly Forgiving

There are two phases of so-called "liberal religion" totally inconsistent with each other. I mean the critical, and the sentimental, attitude which is assumed by the same teachers. Popular literature about religion shapes and moulds the Scriptures in order to suit the taste of the age, as a child alters the expression of the face of an India-rubber doll. For example, miracles, all that is supernatural, are rejected on the ground that God is a God of Law. He rules by certain natural laws, never broken nor set aside. So the "signs and wonders" of the Bible cannot be admitted.

But the same teacher or writer swings like a pendulum to the sentimental side. God's compassionate tenderness to all men overlooks all human frailty. He calls no man to account for false opinions. With smiling face He opens the door of heaven to the Atheist and the Christian alike. To teach that eternal Justice requires that sin be punished, in the person of the sinner, or in the person of his substitute, is to make God to be limited by a law which He cannot break. His pity is subject to no law. If in His Word He has laid down a law that without the sacrifice of the Cross salvation is impossible, then He rises superior to that law, on the flood-tide of His compassion.

This is simply sentimentality dressing itself in the garb of religion. Shall we say that miracles are impossible because God is controlled by what we call "the laws of Nature," and then leap over to the sentimental side, and argue that He is above all law, in the face of His declaration that either the sinner or his substitute must suffer?

To drop out of our faith the expiation for sin in the agonies of Jesus on the Cross is to draw the vital sap from the tree, the life-blood from the system!

But aside from that, there is an aspect toward our duty of forgiving, in this sentimental view, which I have never heard presented in the pulpit.

We are to forgive others "as God forgave us." Is that the language of this text? No; but we are to forgive others "as God for Christ's sake, forgave us." If the theory to which I have referred were true, He forgives simply out of good nature and amiability of spirit. There was nothing in the way of His forgiving. No law prevented it. No attribute of the Divine nature had to be satisfied. No sacrifice had to exhaust the claim of eternal Justice upon the sinner. It was all as easy as the gliding of water down a descending channel. Then, if we are to accept this theory of God's way of forgiving, our exercise of pardon is to cost us nothing: for it cost Him nothing.

Does the Word of God teach anything like that? What does this mean: "All we, like sheep have gone astray; and the Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquities of us all."

Hear this: "Who, His own self, bore our sins in His own body on the tree."

Or this: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us unto God."

Remember, that Sufferer was "God manifest in the flesh." He said: "I and my Father are One."

Then, to pave the way for our pardon, God became incarnate, and paid our debt in the coin of His own intolerable suffering.

It was not an amiable and kindly Governor sign-

ing a pardon which it was easier to grant than to refuse. It was a Governor, in order that a prisoner might go free, taking his place, and working out his sentence! Have you ever tried to forecast what will be the feelings toward each other, of men and women in Germany and Belgium, in France and Russia and England, when this hideous war shall end?

You and I have shed no blood, lost no fortune, given no relative as a sacrifice on the bloody altar of the conflict of the nations. We say of the peoples slaughtering each other: "When Peace shall once more hover on white wings over Europe, they must forgive and forget." But the men who may survive the carnage, but crippled for life, or bearing the scars of wounds; the women with burning memories of husbands and fathers, sons or brothers, dying on the one side or the other, can only forgive at a cost we cannot reckon. They must sacrifice the deepest feelings that move the soul!

Hear my last word! At what cost did Almighty God make our forgiveness possible?

"God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

And that costly sacrifice is the model of forgiving He would have you and me to follow.

XVII

FIDELITY AND CONSCIENCE: A POST-VACATION MESSAGE

> *"Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom. But they could find none occasion or fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him."*
>
> DANIEL 6:4.

I ONE day received a circular asking that I would invest in a supposed gold mine in Mexico. The argument employed was that this land, into which no pick had been thrust, was in close proximity to a developed mine, which had yielded millions to its fortunate owners.

There is a somewhat similar principle which it is well to follow in the study of the Bible. When you have found in the Word of God a passage which has proved rich in spiritual blessing, you are likely to discover others equally instructive in close connection with it.

I have more than once spoken upon the character of Daniel; taking my theme especially from that period of his history when the jealousy of his fellow-officials at the Court of Babylon was plotting his destruction. But in that same portion of this remarkable book I find my text this morning. We have learned from our past study the striking lessons that Daniel's example taught, of an unshaken

faith in God, when all the world was arrayed against this exile in Babylon. But no quality which he exhibited stands out in bolder conspicuousness than his conscientious fidelity, witnessed by his worst enemies, and whose testimony is recorded in the text.

As I come back to my beloved flock to-day, I want to speak of conscientiousness and fidelity on the part of the men and women who profess the Saviour's name.

All through the summer I have kept in touch with the current affairs of three great commercial and financial centres, through reading the daily papers of Boston, New York, and Chicago. The result has been to convince me that the duty of the Christian pastor in a great city, and in this strange, sad epoch of the history of the world, is not to preach about the horrors of war, or the proper course for the Government to pursue, or any other topic which current public events may suggest; but about something nearer to ourselves. The things which I have read have revealed so much in our metropolitan life of the temptations to blunt the edge of conscience through the love of money on the one hand, and the love of questionable pleasure on the other, that this old-time example of Daniel's fidelity to conscience looms up before me, as the lesson of the hour.

I. I Would Speak of Conscientious Fidelity in Our Religion

At the first glance it may seem to some of you that your religion is precisely the sphere where conscientiousness and fidelity spring up and flourish as naturally as the grass upon your lawn. They are indigenous to the soil. You have no necessity for

exhortations to cultivate these spiritual qualities in the realm of religion. A Russian-born peasant, or one of the peons of distracted Mexico, needs to have the ideas of liberty and law instilled into his mind. But the native-born American has all that as an inheritance.

Now when we argue thus, it is well to be sure that we make no mistake. It is an error to take it for granted that the atmosphere of our religion is so full of good that we cannot help being conscientious there. There are dangers to conscience right in the sphere of religion itself. Shall I tell you how?

(*a*) For one thing, because with the most of us our religion is an inheritance.

If you examine the list of distinguished officers in the regular army or navy of our country, you will be perhaps surprised to find how many are the sons of military men, or of the naval heroes of our Civil War. No doubt they are patriotic, and ready to encounter perils by land and sea, for their country's sake. But we may well question whether their inheritance of their profession gives them the stimulus to danger, to sacrifice, to suffering, that is felt by him, who leaves his plough in the furrow, or lays off the jurist's robes, or closes his place of prosperous trade, to enter the ranks at his country's call.

So with many Christians. Their faith is a heritage from a long line of Godly ancestry. Let us clearly understand that there is no dishonour in that. If the Gospel of Jesus Christ was the staff on which your father and mother leaned as they went down to the edge of Jordan, if the peace, the joy, the purity which made their lives a benediction, was bequeathed to you, oh, accept it as ten thousand times

a richer inheritance than the legacies of the millionaire! But you need something more than such an inherited religion. You want a personal experience of the power of Christ. The man of this day and generation whose religion works right out in his character and conduct, as Daniel's religion did, is filled with the truth that he has been saved by the blood of Jesus.

I may be willing to do a great deal to serve him who paid the debts which were crushing my father fifty years ago. But there is no power which I possess, which I am not ready to consecrate to him who last week paid mine.

Now remember, Daniel inherited his religion. He was of "the children of Judah." He was of "the kings' seed," the royal line. In his veins flowed the blood of righteous sovereigns, like Hezekiah and Josiah. But it was not that heritage which made him so faithful that his rivals in politics, his competitors at court, could find no fault with his conduct of affairs of the empire. It was a personal experience of God's grace. He was a believer from conviction. To know that the God of Jacob was his refuge, made his conscience tender and quick to resist temptation.

(*b*) Again, there are dangers to our fidelity in the sphere of religion, growing out of the respectability of Christianity.

The Norway pine, rooted in the rocks, facing the blasts of the north wind, and defying the winter to chill its life, is no product of a soft and tropic climate. And God's heroes have always been the men and women who have stood the shock of fierce temptation, and borne Life's stress and storm. Jacob was for twenty years a slave to Laban.

Moses served as a shepherd in the deserts of Midian until old age had overtaken him. David was hunted by Saul until his life was hardly worth living. Elijah was driven from one savage hiding-place to another, with Ahab's spies ever on his trail. Peter was scourged publicly. Paul came to be counted "the offscouring of all things." But every one of these men developed into the strong characters of religious history. They were faithful when everything seemed to be against them. In a word, the faith which they professed was anything but respectable in the eyes of their contemporaries.

It certainly was not eminently respectable to be a Jew, living up to the religion of his ancestry, when Daniel was at the imperial court of Babylon! No doubt he had to stand like a rock against contempt, and even unconcealed ridicule. But it was just there,—mark it well,—in the sphere of his religion, that Daniel was "faithful." It becomes a serious question: "Are we faithful to our Christianity, as Daniel was to his Judaism?" We go to church. We read our Bibles. We attend meetings for prayer. We may teach in the Sunday School. But it is respectable to do these things. The man or woman, who openly espouses the cause of Christ, does not ordinarily lose caste in our social life, but gains esteem. Right there lies one of the dangers of modern Church-membership. Does not that very respectability of our religion have an effect upon us like that which the soft climate of the southern seas exerts upon the islanders, enervating and soothing to spiritual sleep?

Let us get down to the bottom of our motives for public acknowledgment of Christ.

The Church at Sardis enjoyed an excellent reputa-

tion. Everybody spoke well of it. But Christ said to that Church: "Thou hast a name to live and art dead."

(*c*) I am also compelled in honesty to say that there is a temptation to unfaithfulness in the sphere of Religion, which grows out of the twentieth-century eagerness for organic union among all who call themselves Christians. I heard at our seaside home a criticism visited upon a faithful Gospel-sermon, because it boldly presented Christ as the only Saviour of sinners. "What right," it was asked, "had the preacher to teach doctrine offensive to some in the congregation, who held that Jesus was mere man?" That is the spirit of the age. People have been so captivated with the idea of consolidation of all the various divisions of Christendom into one vast body, that truth and principle have been sacrificed. Ministers are afraid to tell the plain truth of Scripture, lest they irritate some to whom such truths are not palatable. The hour has struck for Christian men and women to call a halt, and ask if there be not a limit beyond which our zeal for the union of all phases of religious thought and belief, ought not to be carried. Are we as positive in our championship of the fundamental truths of the Gospel, as the New Testament is? Are we ready to echo the strong utterances of the Apostles? Will we stand shoulder to shoulder with Peter, when he says: "There is none other name under heaven, whereby we can be saved, but the name of Jesus only"? Will we clasp hands with Paul, when he declares: "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ"? Do we shrink from following where John leads the way: "Ye have heard that antichrist shall come: even now there are many antichrists."

That would be denounced to-day as bigotry. But in the eyes of the All-seeing God it is faithfulness to His unchanging and eternal truth.

II. In Closing, I Would Speak of Faithfulness in Our Daily Life

In one of the quaint old market-towns of England, I once saw in the centre of traffic an ancient stone cross. To us Americans I fear that it would seem incongruous to set up the symbol of the faith of the Christian where buying and selling, the driving of bargains, and shrewd schemes of money-making were carried on. For it is difficult to get rid of the fact that business is a highly-organized species of selfishness. What are styled "business principles" are rules by which self-interest pushes its plans.

But it seemed to me a beautiful idea of our English forefathers, to put the Cross where no trader could help seeing it. It was an impressive way of saying: "Nowhere do men need the thought of the love of Jesus as in the midst of the struggle for material success."

We can carry the memory of Christ's unselfishness, even to His death upon the Cross, into our daily work. For surely, the Cross is the highest expression of the motto blazoned upon the banner of the Saviour: "I came, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me." It is a type of the fidelity, yes (with all reverence I say it), the conscientiousness of Christ.

See how it was with Daniel. What conceivable obligation was he under to the Babylonian king to be scrupulous in his discharge of his public duties? Was it not that monarch who held him a captive and

an exile? Gilded though his chains were, he was, nevertheless, a bondman.

True, the king of Babylon had promoted and exalted this foreigner and exile to a place of vast power and dignity. But only because the king's self-interest discovered that Daniel's wisdom could be utilized to the advantage of Babylon and its sovereign. When, a few years ago, the Government of Persia put an American in full control of all its financial resources and expenditures, it was not done for his sake, or for any advantage accruing to him, but because his talent might be used to extricate Persia's treasury from complete bankruptcy.

What motive, then, had Daniel for fidelity to his trust? Why consult anything but his own interests? Vast contracts had to be made in the name of the king. Why not give them to the men who would return to the Prime Minister the largest margin of the profits? Daniel it was through whom the people of the empire were taxed. Then let him so farm out the collection of the taxes, that the heaviest percentage should be his. Distant provinces, of which King Darius knew nothing, and for which he cared less, must have their governors appointed. Daniel could choose for such posts men who, in return for the favour, would line his purse with gold.

Did he therefore do things which in our modern phrase have branded officials and legislators as "grafters"? Let the text give answer. His sworn enemies bore this testimony: "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it concerning the law of his God." Their lynx-eyed watching for some accusation of corruption in office had proved utterly in vain.

I want to press the question upon men here, who

have in greater or less degree the sort of business ability which shone out in the career of Daniel. It is a glorious thing to consecrate success to Him who died for you. Only recently, I heard a conversation in which the participants discussed the question as to what use they would individually make of money were wealth to come into their possession. It was a pitiful thing to note that the first purpose which rose to the imagination and to the lips of each one was some luxury as yet beyond their means. Yet how poor and unworthy, in the presence of what consecrated money or success could do, seems the desire for such personal gratification.

What the Church and its members need most of all in these days, is cross-bearing and self-forgetfulness in common, every-day life. A friend of mine employed a man to work at common, unskilled labour. It was a menial task. It afforded little room for enthusiasm or ambition. And the slack, languid way in which the daily task was done showed how little interest the labourer felt in his job. But a day came when the employer observed a change. The man showed a new zeal in his work. His time was scrupulously given to doing the best in his power. What did it mean? The riddle was solved when a comrade said: "John has been converted." Conversion, devotion to Christ, if genuine, will show in the "common round" of daily toil.

In closing, I call your attention to a marked peculiarity of Daniel's conscience: It was not local. He had been a worshipper of Jehovah in Judea. But that worship was not the fashion in Babylon. Good society at the capital of Darius bowed down before the images of Belus, or Tammuz, or Ishtar, or Nebo. Daniel could have reasoned that he might better be

out of the world than out of fashion. But he was of the kind of whom at a later day a Roman poet wrote: "They who cross the seas change indeed their skies, but not their hearts." That example comes close home to us. Were we, when we travelled in Europe, the same Christians that we were in Chicago? And now, that war, with all its horrors, keeps us on this side of the Atlantic, have we one religion for Christ Church, and something different at the seashore, in the mountains, or when we flit by automobile from place to place among people who do not know us?

I pray that you will not thrust this question away, without an honest answer to your conscience and to your God. My prayer for this dear Church, as I come back to it to-day, is that it may boldly face a Godless world with Daniel's answer to the king of Babylon:

"Be it known unto thee, O King, that we will not worship thy gods—nor the golden image which thou hast set up!"

XVIII

AN OLD-TIME CHRISTIAN ON SUNDAY

"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day."
REVELATION 1 : 10.

THERE can be no doubt that many Christians who read their Bibles, stop at the Revelation of St. John. Certainly some, who have sought to mine its treasures of golden truth, have met with disaster. The wildest religious theories, and the most fanatical sects, which have disturbed believers with their distortions of Christianity, have based their reasoning upon the language of this last book of the Bible. Truly Christian men and women have shrunk from its study, as "the burnt child dreads the fire."

Then it becomes an important inquiry, how far such apprehensions should influence us? What ought you and I to do with the Apocalypse?

If we go to the Revelation of St. John, not, with prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to seek what it teaches us; but to get out of it something to buttress our preconceived opinions, it were better to let it alone.

The warlike nobility of Rome in the Middle Ages built their palaces out of marble for which they stripped the walls of the Coliseum. To them that historic building was only a quarry. So can we deal with the Apocalypse, or any other book of the Bible.

But he, who humbly seeks in the Revelation of St.

John helps on his pathway to Heaven, will not be disappointed.

I believe that the text I have chosen is an illustration of the principle.

I. There Is Here a Record of the Christening of the First Day of the Week

The Apostolic Church was never satisfied to leave a convert from heathenism without a new and distinctively Christian name. That was natural. If I could seize upon some den of corruption here in Chicago, and transform it into a Christian Church, I should certainly give it a Christian name as well as a Christian character.

Remember that the first day of the week was the old heathen day of the sun. It was the chosen festival of those who worshipped the chief of "the host of heaven." They had defiled it with unholy rites. Therefore in the name "Sunday" it bore abiding witness to its old paganism. Surely, it was fitting that the early Christians could not abide its ancient designation, and so changed it to "The Lord's Day."

But why was this day, rather than any other of the seven, chosen to bear the name of Christ?

I have heard of parents who selected for their child a name by lot, appealing to chance or hazard to provide one that should be appropriate. We may rest assured that for this christening of the first day of the week there was no chance, but some adequate reason. We know that it was the first day of the week on which our Lord rose from the dead. Before that Easter Sunday had ended, He had appeared five times, to Mary Magdalen, to the other

Galilean women, to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, to His Apostle Peter, and to ten of His apostles assembled together. In a word, Christ Himself chose that day of the week for special revelation of Himself.

But just a week later He re-appears. It was a Sunday when He rose; and it was again Sunday when He made His resurrection a convincing reality to His followers.

More than that, the Day of Pentecost fell that year on the first day of the week.*

It was chosen by the Saviour to be the time of the fulfilling of His promise that " the Comforter should come." Thus He again made it His day. And from that time to this, in the history of His Church, Sunday has been " The Lord's Day."

I have discussed the topic of the name employed in this text, because it has a profound significance. Christians have indulged in much debate as to whether the Mosaic Sabbath is binding on the conscience of believers in Christ.

But this very name settles the question. This is not Moses's day, but " the Lord's Day." We keep it because He has written His name upon it.

Anything which we hold most precious, and desire to keep as peculiarly and exclusively our own, we mark with our own name.

Precisely so has the Saviour given His name to the first day of the week. If He entrusts this treasured possession of His to our keeping, it is only that we may sacredly watch over it, and over the use we make of it.

*Smith's Bible Dictionary—Article, "*Lord's Day.*"

II. The Text Suggests the Purpose of the Lord's Day

The masterpieces of Art are not always to be found in the great public galleries. In a little chapel, separated from the main edifice of an old Church, and hidden by curtains, I once saw a painting by Guido Reni. In that quiet recess, alone, could I get the revelation the picture was meant to teach. God had a revelation to make to the Apostle John. It was a picture whose startling outlines and vivid colours must have burst upon the beloved disciple with an overwhelming power.

But where did God take him to draw aside the veil that concealed the apocalyptic vision? Not amidst the busy scenes of ordinary days; but on the one day to which Christ had affixed His own name: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day."

That is the preface to the most wonderful revelation ever vouchsafed to mortal man.

Beloved, what St. John received on that Sunday, is what you and I need to receive. I do not mean the vision of futurity which was unveiled to that old man. But the need of every Christian is a more intimate knowledge, a clearer revelation of what Christ is. The keenest disappointment of the real believer is that he finds his own life and character to fall so short of being like Christ.

When the Scandinavian sculptor, Thorwaldsen, had finished his statue of the Saviour, he mourned that his career was ended. So perfect was his last work, that he could see no room for progress. I have never known a genuine Christian to be thus satisfied with the image of the Lord Jesus which he was carving out of the marble of his own life.

There is always something toward which to stretch out his arms in yearning desire. I say again that the imperative need of every Christian is a progressive revelation of Christ. The patriarchs of the Old Testament had no such revelation of what God was, as was given to Moses. Nor had Moses the light of truth which shone out in Isaiah; nor Isaiah such clear vision of the Saviour's glory as was revealed to John the Baptist. And of John the Baptist our Lord said that though His rough-clad herald was "greatest of those born of women," yet "the least in the Kingdom of heaven was greater than" John.

The older we grow in the spiritual life, the more we yearn to know of Christ. St. Paul was an aged disciple, when he breathed out this longing of his soul: "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection!"

I firmly believe that the emptiness and soul-hunger which we so often find in ourselves are the fruit of a willingness to know only just so much of Jesus, as we learned at our conversion.

But how are we to learn more? Where are we to look for more intimacy with Christ? Hear the answer in this text! The latest and most glorious of revelations came to St. John through his employment of Sunday. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day."

I push that thought upon your conscientious consideration. Do not deaden or blunt the edge of its keen heart-searching.

Sometimes you come to your pastor; and often you commune with your own sad heart and wonder why you get no more personal intimacy with Christ; why there is no fuller revelation to your soul of

what the Saviour is. Oh, ask yourself if you have sought it where St. John sought it! Are you "in the Spirit on the Lord's Day"?

In a word, then, I ask you to put the query to yourself, as to how you employ the day on which Jesus has engraved His name, and sealed it as His own? St. John was "in the Spirit" on that day. The expression points out the distinguishing trait of the Apostolic Sunday. St. John achieved religious success in the highest sense of that word. He certainly did come into an intimacy with Christ. How natural for us to ask, as the Philistines asked of Samson: "Tell us now, we pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth?" "What," we ask of St. John, "was the way in which you used that Sunday on the isle of Patmos, which glorified it with a revelation of the Master?"

He answers in the text. It was a day of spirituality. "I was," he says, "in the Spirit on the Lord's Day."

I am not forgetting that the spiritual light which the Apostle had differed in degree and in kind from that which the Holy Ghost is ready to bestow on us. For he was illuminated with a supernatural vision of things to come, which fitted him to be one of the writers of the New Testament. Yet, after all, the fact remains, that he so used the Lord's Day that his soul was flooded with the Spirit of God!

I beg you to think how this fact lifts the Christian idea of the Lord's Day above the common notion about the Sabbath. Perhaps you ask me: "Am I bound by the old rules of the Jewish Law concerning one day out of seven? Have I not in the Gospel a Christian liberty that breaks the shackles of the Mosaic Law? Must I obey Sabbatical injunctions

imposed on the Hebrew race three thousand years ago?"

That is not the question at issue. Instead of asking by what rules and regulations for Sabbath-observance your conscience is bound, put this question to yourself: "What will most effectually secure a spiritual blessing on the Lord's Day?"

A slave asks: "What orders of my master must I obey, to escape the lash?" But that surely is no question to come from the lips of a free-born citizen. He asks: "What can I do to get the greatest good out of my rights and privileges as a free man?"

See how this applies to Christians in the twentieth century!

It is a stormy Sunday. Rain falls from weeping skies, or snow drifts over the blocked-up paths. If I go to Church it is at the sacrifice of comfort and convenience. True, such weather-conditions would not keep me from business, nor from a place of amusement. Is there any law of God that requires me to make such a sacrifice to attend public worship?

My brother, that is not the question. The real issue is: Will my spiritual life be prospered most by attendance on public worship, or by its neglect? Shall I get my heart most surely filled with the Holy Spirit, where Christ has promised a special presence, or where, with conscience all the time uneasy, I shun whatever self-denial is involved in facing tempestuous weather?

Again, shall I "break the Sabbath," by beginning the Lord's Day with the reading of the Sunday paper? Is there anything about the Sunday *Tribune* or *Herald* in the Fourth Commandment? St. John never would have rummaged in the archives of Moses to satisfy his conscience on that matter. He

would have asked: "Is that the best preparation for a day which should fill my life with Christ's blessed companionship? Is that sort of literature the best guarantee of a spiritual frame of mind? Glance at other ways of spending Sunday. Some of you will say that the Sabbath is a divinely appointed day of rest from labour; and you are only keeping God's Law, when you get respite from toil in Sunday driving, in communing with Nature in the parks, or in that importation from across the sea, "a week-end party" in the country. God's Law provides such respite for overworked minds and bodies. Beloved, "we are not under the law, but under grace." Can you honestly believe that such ways of resting will bring you closer to Christ, and reveal to you more of what He is?

I was greatly distressed some weeks ago, to discover that the temptation had overcome some of our young men and women to seek Sunday entertainment in the moving-picture theatres. And they ask: "Does the Fourth Commandment prohibit such amusement?"

I beg that you will not satisfy yourselves with seeking rules which forbid one thing and permit another on the Lord's Day. Take a broader and more Christian rule, which will let you do nothing which will interfere with a spiritual Sunday.

Just a closing word. It was a day of trouble when St. John was on the isle of Patmos. His faith and courage were tried "as by fire."

Well, here is one in trouble. Away from home and friends, a wanderer in the wilderness of this huge city, it is more accident than purpose that led him to this place of worship. How many such in Chicago, who once found solace in every trial, but who rebel

against the discipline of sorrow, and spurn the sympathy of God's people!

St. John was an exile from his friends, his home, and his Church. He was in sore trouble. But he "was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day."

Poverty sometimes leads a soul to forget that our Lord Himself was one who "became poor for our sakes." God's House is stigmatized as a place for the prosperous and rich, and shunned with something like hatred.

But this beggared apostle, poor, and a slave in his old age, was "in the Spirit on the Lord's Day."

I have known bereavement to separate a soul from Him whose hand holds the rod. We are lonely, as we remember those with whom we once worshipped, and took sweet counsel in God's House. But who could have been more lonely than the old man who had outlived all his brethren, and who on that bleak isle of Patmos, hears the waves break upon the cliffs, and listens vainly for the voices of the dead? But loneliness only drew him near to Christ. It was a bereaved old man, who wrote: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day."

XIX

AN INVITATION PROMPTLY ACCEPTED

"When Thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." PSALM 27:8.

IN the British Museum I once saw a block of stone engraved with the autobiography of an Assyrian king. A translation into our English speech was at hand, and enabled me as it were to put my ear close to the lips of the dead monarch, and hear his very words. A gulf of 2,500 years was between me and that ancient king. But I somehow was conscious of a wider and deeper chasm than the mere lapse of time could dig. For his heart found expression there, giving vent to his passions and ambitions, his inner motives and gratifications. Into the emotions thus revealed, I could no more enter than I could sympathize with the song of a Sioux or Piute warrior as he dances the scalp-dance!

Before me lies one of the Psalms of David. It is unquestionably older than the stony tablet of Shalmanezer. Yet it, too, is record of the experiences of a king. It is, like the Assyrian inscription, not only an historic record, but an outbreathing of emotions.

Well, what can I have in common with an ancient despot's written utterances? What possible sympathy can exist between the feelings which burst out in the song of one who lived in the narrow and imperfect civilization of Palestine, a thousand years before the

Christian Era, and my own experiences in the wide and ever widening light and knowledge of this Western world in this twentieth century? Yet here stands the marvellous fact: the chords of David's harp do waken responding notes in your soul and mine. In some mysterious way they sound the depths of our experience, and photograph our deepest feelings.

What does it all mean? Why do these Oriental songs outlive the changes of nearly three thousand years?

There is only one satisfactory answer. The Spirit of God was at work in the Psalmist's soul. The Spirit of God is at work in the souls of His people to-day.

Like three twisted strands in a cord, three great ideas run through the Book of Psalms. They are a sense of the greatness and holiness of God; the wretched sinfulness of Man; and that He whom our sin has wronged, is ever waiting to give us pardon and salvation. It is precisely these three ideas which dominate every soul to which the Holy Ghost comes with convincing power. As the same stars, which to David "declared the glory of God," shine on us, so do these ancient songs speak to our modern hearts and lives. Let us see how this appears in our text.

I. We Have Here a Divine Voice

No man can study the Psalms without perceiving that they suggest that God should be as much expected to speak to men, as that the sun should shine, or the winds breathe on the earth, or the rivers flow toward the sea. But the difference between the

Psalmist's God and the gods of the nations of the Psalmist's day was exactly here. Baal, Ashtaroth, and Moloch were worshipped with trembling terror. But they did not speak. The heathen idea of his divinity has been well expressed in the picture of an Arab climbing up to the mouth of the Sphinx and vainly putting his ear to the lips of stone.

"They have mouths, and speak not," was the biting sarcasm of another psalm.

Not so the God of the Hebrew. "The Lord, even the most mighty God, hath spoken, and called the world from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof."

That was the distinctive attribute of Jehovah. He has ever been unwilling to have men in ignorance of Himself. He spoke to Abraham in far Chaldea, to Jacob by the stony pillow at Bethel, to Moses at the Burning Bush. And He, who "in times past spake unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son."

The Biblical idea of God is that of a God who speaks to reveal Himself to men. Think of the far-reaching consequences which flow from that fact.

(*a*) If God has always found a way to speak to men, it shows His interest in us.

Does a government care for its citizens? It shows that interest by proclamations, by the publishing of its laws, by posting its directions and warnings in public places. In a word, such a Government speaks to its people. Does a father love his children? He shows it by counsel, instruction, guidance. He points out the path of safety, and warns of pitfalls in the path. His interest in his children, and his love for them, impels him to talk with them.

God is at once our Governor and our Father. It

would be inconsistent with His relations to us that He should keep silence.

Am I making a bold assertion when I say that in our own day are men and women, trying to satisfy the hunger of the soul for God, by turning to idols as dumb as Baal, when on Carmel's top his prophets cried, "O Baal, hear us!"

Nevertheless, it is a true assertion. What is the so-called Agnosticism but a theory like this: "If there be any God, He is a God who never speaks about that which men are most interested to know. I know that in a few years, perhaps in a few hours, I must enter the cloudy veil which hangs before the bound of this life. Has the Agnostic any comfort for me when, in answer to my question, "What lies beyond?" he replies: "I do not know"?

Science has been substituted for God in some people's worship. When a devotee of modern science looks down into the grave where he has laid his child, does it relieve his pangs of grief that Nature dumbly tells him: "There is no escape from Death; for dissolution of the body is one of Nature's laws"? What tear of his does Science wipe away, because it can show him the exact chemical process by which the atoms of the little frame are absorbed in mother-earth?

Oh! how dumb are these modern gods before the God who speaks, and says: "In Heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in Heaven."

There is a further point suggested by this thought of God's speaking to men, which I beg you not to leave unnoticed. The Psalmist said: "My heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." It was an echo of the voice which had already spoken, "Seek

ye my face!" An echo never comes before the sound that wakens it.

In the room where some one uses the telephone, I hear only the voice of the speaker whom I see. But what he says is clearly an answer to some unseen one who had spoken first to him. That is the order of all Divine relations. God speaks first. Did He not call Abraham when he was a worshipper of idols? Moses was not seeking God, when the Voice spoke to him out of the Burning Bush. Turn where you will in History, it is always God who is first to break the hideous silence brooding over the gulf which parts God and Man asunder.

Does any seize upon the fact I have told, and say: "That is just my position. God must speak first. I am waiting for Him to call me. When He shall make a personal appeal to me: 'Seek ye my face!' my heart shall echo: 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek.'"

Oh! let us not mock God. He has spoken first. The very pagan, who never saw a Bible, or heard of Jesus Christ, has heard God's voice in Conscience.

But you! When did you first learn a prayer? God spoke to you then. When did you first open a Bible? God spoke to you then. When did you first know that Christ had said: "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out"? God spoke to you then.

Is there one soul in this congregation who cannot recall moments—alas! were they moments only?—when deep in the heart sprang up a yearning, "Would to God, I were a better, holier, more unselfish, and unworldly man!" Who do you suppose put that passionate,—though it were short-lived,—desire into your heart? God spoke to you then.

May I depart from my usual custom by quoting Christina Rossetti's wonderful lines?

"But all night long that Voice spake urgently,
'Open to me.'
Still harping in mine ears;
'Rise! Let me in!'
Pleading with tears;
'Open to Me, that I may come to thee'—
While the dew dropped, while the dark hours were cold.
'My feet bleed; see my face;
See my hands bleed, that bring thee grace.
My heart doth bleed for thee;
Open to me!'

"So till the break of day;
Then died away
That Voice, in silence, as of sorrow.
Then footsteps like a sigh
Passed me by;—
Lingering footsteps, slow to pass.
On the morrow
I saw upon the grass
Each footprint marked in blood, and on my door
The mark of blood forever more."

II. What Does the Voice of God Say?

An old custom of the stately tribunals of England still prevails in American courts of law. An officer stands forth, and cries in the old Norman French: "Oyez! Oyez! Hear ye! Hear ye!"

It surely ought to mean that something important is coming. The Court demands attention.

So surely does God require the listening ear! What is He about to say? "Seek ye my face!"

Is that what we would expect God to say? When Absalom's hands were red with his brother's blood, his own father, David, would not see the assassin. "And the king said: 'Let him turn to his own house! Let him not see my face'!"

That was human nature. David was not the first, nor the last father, disgraced by a son or daughter, to crush natural affection, and become a stranger to his child.

It is not easy to apply this thought to one's own case.

I do not like to think that I have disgraced the spiritual family into which God has graciously adopted me.

But, dear fellow-Christians, shall we let our self-esteem blindfold us as to what we really are? There is one room in your house which you permit no visitor to inspect. You plead that "it is not in order." Tell me; would you willingly open the secret chamber of your soul, and reveal to any human being how far from accord with your Christian vows you have wandered, even in the one week past?

We know the traps of Sin into which we walked with eyes wide open. We know how and where we flung ourselves into the surf of Temptation rushing seaward like a mill-race. We know that we carried into the powder-magazine of our hearts the lighted candles of Passion.

The outside world may have had "no admittance." But you and I, in the fierce light of awakened Conscience, know what poor specimens of followers of Jesus Christ we have been.

But God knows it too. "His eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." Can He have any use for such as we are? I hear His voice: "Away from me, ye that work iniquity!" "Let me not look upon those who have dishonoured my name! Keep at a distance from me!"

"O beloved, was ever sweeter music to the soul pierced by the arrows of Conscience, and humbled under a sense of wretched failure, than this old psalm: "Seek ye my face!"?

I have been probing the souls of members of the Church as I have probed my own. Has it all been meaningless to some who have heard me? Is such sense of sin beyond the range of their experience? Naturally so. The photographer's plate catches the picture, because to use his phrase, it has been "sensitized." So, it is he who has been touched most deeply by the Holy Spirit who feels most keenly his failures and sins. But there are souls who are not sensitive to their own distance from what Christ was, and would have them to be, because they have not suffered God's Spirit to have His way with them.

Would it be possible for me to sit down before a mirror, and be honest in saying, "I look no older than I did twenty-five years ago"?

I do not question the honesty of some who flatter themselves with the delusion that they are "just men, who need no repentance." But I know that they have never, even for five minutes, looked steadily into this mirror: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul and mind, and thy neighbour as thyself." For it is eternally true, "By the Law is the knowledge of Sin."

Would you persist in holding a mirror, year after

year, before eyes which habitually closed against the mirror's revelation? Would not human patience be exhausted? Would not human nature cry out: "Depart from me! Do not approach one whose love meets such obstinate neglect"? But to every such soul God is calling, "Seek ye my face!"

III. In Closing, I Have but a Moment to Speak of the Heart's Echo to the Divine Voice

As a child, I used to watch, on the Fourth of July, the flash of a cannon on a distant hill-top. But I could count all my fingers before the thunder of the explosion fell upon my ear. No such interval elapsed between the Lord's invitation to the Psalmist, and the Psalmist's answer. "When Thou saidst, Seek ye my face, my heart said, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." The response was instantaneous.

You remember some sermon that touched conscience to the quick. God spoke in that sermon: "Seek ye my face." Yes; you would seek God's face. You wanted more time. To-morrow, next week, or that favoured date for good resolutions, next New Year's Day. How the ship of that Sunday faded into the distance, bearing some souls out upon the bosom of Christ's love. But your name was not in the passenger-list. Your response to the voice of God did not follow close upon the heavenly call.

God was speaking to all men. The invitation is not, "Seek thou," but "Seek ye." But the answer was personal, individual: "Thy face, Lord, will I seek."

Down the long line of a whole regiment rings the word of command. But to each soldier it comes as though it were meant for him alone.

To all this congregation God has said to-day: "Seek ye my face." My brother, my sister, He has said it to you. May this solemn moment hear your heart's echo to the Divine Voice: "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." Amen.

XX

THE DIGGING OUT OF THE STOPPED-UP WELLS

"And Isaac digged again the wells of water which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham." GENESIS 26: 18.

ANTIQUITY generally inspires reverence. The snowy hair, the bent form, and the tottering gait of Age suggest the exclamation: "What a venerable man!" Yet why? He may be old in sin. His life may have scattered curses, instead of blessings in his path. Mere length of days entitles no man to veneration.

As you journeyed down the Rhine, high on its rugged cliff, your eye caught the sight of a ruined castle. As you thought of the long procession of the centuries that had come and gone while that massive structure still survived, it woke within you a sense of reverence and awe. Yet all the time you knew that that stronghold had been the den of some robber baron of mediæval times, who lived by plundering the wayfarers on the river, and making the peasantry around his castle the victims of his power. The ruin is no more entitled to be revered than the lair of a wolf, strewn with the bleached bones of its prey.

Again you stood deciphering inscriptions in the

pavement of an ancient Church. Beneath those slabs of stone were graves so old that their history was lost in the mists of Tradition. Could you help treading softly, speaking in low tones, and uncovering your head? But the place was one which never echoed to the sound of the Gospel. Here were forged the fetters of Superstition.

I suppose that this singular veneration on the part of Christians for the person, the place, or the building which is old, arises directly out of the simple fact that the further back we go in Christian History, the nearer we get to Christ and His inspired apostles. Yet right and Scriptural as such a feeling may be it has its subtle peril.

What do we mean by "old"? When I was a boy, the man of forty-five or fifty years seemed to me in the decrepitude of age. It does not appear so now. We may fall into a like confusion of mind as to what is so old in Christian History as to demand and deserve our veneration.

Nevertheless no such difficulty ought to confront the evangelical Christian. Our own Article of Religion, in the forefront of our Book of Common Prayer, voices the conviction of the Protestant, that "no doctrine is to be required as necessary to salvation which cannot be proved by Holy Scripture."

Nothing is old, nothing is venerable to us in Religion but that which has its roots in the Bible.

No wells are those which our forefathers dug, but such as pierce the rock of the inspired Word. Yet some men feel that the rubbish which chokes all access to the living waters, is too old to be disturbed without sacrilege.

Isaac strikes pick and spade into the soil of the land "wherein his father was a stranger." But a

horror-stricken Philistine puts his hand on Isaac's arm.

"What are you doing, son of Abraham?"

"Digging out the wells which my father dug; but which you have filled up."

"But stop, you son of Abraham! There is not a shovelful of earth which you fling out, which is not sacred with age. These stones, which you pry up so ruthlessly, have lain undisturbed for half a century. The grass has grown for years over the mouth of the well. You are removing with unhallowed hands that which age has made venerable."

I think I hear Isaac's answer: "Your rubbish may be old, but it is rubbish still. The earth and the stones may be venerable in your eyes; but to me and mine the well itself is older. The only thing I seek is the cool, sweet water which you have buried."

Listen to the text! "And Isaac digged again the wells of water which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them up after the death of Abraham."

I. Will You Follow Me in the Historic Application of This Text?

In a great assembly at which I was present, the orchestra suddenly burst forth with the music of "The Star-Spangled Banner." In an instant, as if by some involuntary and irresistible impulse, that vast auditory rose to their feet. Yet I can well remember a time when no such demonstration of patriotic feeling would have been displayed by an American audience. Men and women used to sit in apathetic indifference to the national anthem.

We owe the change to the fact that there has come

in our day and generation a revival of the study of our national history. Perhaps a pride in a revolutionary ancestry, fostered by societies of descendants of those who fought in the war for Independence, has contributed to the sentiment. But certain it is that our Fourth of July and Twenty-Second of February are made like a stereopticon, to flash upon our minds the vivid pictures of what our liberties cost our fathers. Children in our schools are studying the story of the Revolution as never when I was young; and such study of history kindles the latent spark of patriotism into flame. The Church should learn the lesson.

It is high time for a revival of those spiritual forces which wrought the Reformation of the sixteenth century. The Christian Church of that day was as little like the Church of the first, the second, or the third century, as the Bishop of Rome, robed in scarlet, throned as a monarch, and ruling with despotic power over Emperors and Kings, was like the fisherman to whose office he claimed to succeed. For a thousand years the Church had suppressed the Bible. The wells of salvation in Scripture had been choked with Tradition.

But when Luther in Germany, Zwingli in Switzerland, and Latimer and Ridley in England, dug down through the traditions, to the water of Truth, a horrified protest swept over Europe. The "Gospellers," for such was the name that truly described them, had dared to lay their hands on what was old and venerable. They had done violence to the principle which makes the Christian revere that which bears the seal of Antiquity. They had swept away customs, doctrines, and traditions, hoary with centuries, with as little remorse as if they had been the web

which the spider wove since the setting of yesterday's sun!

"Yes," was the Reformers' reply, "they are old. But the Gospel is older. They have existed for centuries. But the water of God's well which they have choked, existed centuries before." That was three hundred years ago. To-day Europe is in revolt against the Papacy. The temporal power has been taken from him who once ruled the world from his seat in the Vatican. France expels the orders of monks and nuns, and turns their vast possessions over to the Republic. Italy is no longer the faithful vassal of the Papal power. Even Spain and Austria are shaken in their hereditary allegiance to Rome. But we Americans are seemingly oblivious or indifferent to the fact that the phase of religion which is relaxing its grip upon European peoples is swelling like the tides at flood over our own country. We Americans have reacted against the religious controversies of past days. We cry out for union of all who call themselves Christians. At the hour when our national authority is crushing combinations in commerce and trade, singularly enough, we demand a "merger" of all phases of religious belief! In our desire not to be disturbed by sectarian divisions and debates, we lose sight of the eternal fact that worse and weaker than a rope of sand is a religious union which is not bound by the supreme authority of the Bible! The great publishing societies in the year 1910 distributed throughout the world nineteen millions of copies of the Bible. But this was the work of Protestant presses! How could the Church of Rome scatter copies of that book? It holds that the laity should not read the Scriptures.

Millitary experts have recently called attention to

the need of our enormously extended coast-line, for better defences against invasion. I profoundly believe that a greater danger lies in our supine indifference to the advance of a religion which to-day, as in the centuries before the Reformation, fills up with tradition the wells of Scripture-truth.

But what is the chief argument employed and plied persistently against a positive loyalty to "the faith of our fathers"? "Your Protestant organizations," says the advocate of the Church of Rome," "are of recent origin. They were born amid the throes of the Reformation, and nursed by the zeal and talents of Luther and his co-workers. But before the sixteenth century they had no existence. We, on the other hand, trace back the Roman Church to Christ and His Apostles. Can you be content with a Church called into being by men who lived fourteen hundred years after the Apostles?"

Such arguments weigh with the young and the unlettered. They are urged upon children whose unwise parents entrust them to Roman Catholic schools. But they would fall as harmless as an arrow upon granite walls, if your children knew what the Reformation was. Long before I was fifteen, D'Aubigné's History of the Reformation had saturated my memory. What had it taught me? That evangelical truth is as ancient as the Bible; that just as paintings of Raphael and Murillo have been restored by careful removing of alterations made by some later hand, so the truth in Jesus was brought to light, when the Reformers cleared it of the incrustations of Tradition. They "digged again" the wells of living water which Christ and the Apostles dug, for after the death of the Apostles, popes and councils had stopped them up.

I can barely allude to another historic application of this text. To us Reformed Episcopalians it is often said: "Yours is a new Church. It is hardly a generation old. It was unknown till Bishop Cummins founded it." Never allow that statement to go unchallenged! It was only when the Church, which we had loyally served, drifted away from the teaching and the worship of the English Reformers, and of those who transplanted the Episcopal Church of England to American soil, that we took the step which conscience demanded. We clung to the old moorings.

Our Prayer Book is in substance identical with that framed by the men whom the "Bloody Mary" burned at the stake. It is almost word for word the book which the venerated William White laid before the bishops of the Church of England and on the basis of which he was consecrated a bishop in 1787.

We hold no doctrine which was not held by the English reformers, and by the founders of the Episcopal Church in America. We have resisted all attempts of a gaudy ritualism to improve upon the simple worship of fifty years ago. We prefer the services as our fathers had them. We have only dug again the wells our fathers dug, for after the death of the fathers, the Ritualists filled them up.

II. Turn to the Personal Application of This Text

The Bible expressly tells us that Isaac was a quiet man. He was not a great chieftain like Abraham, nor a shrewd man of affairs like Jacob.

So, there are men and women now, who could

never lead armies; never sit upon a throne; never grasp the potent lever of great wealth; never preach from a pulpit, or speak from a platform; never write a book, or be talked of in the newspapers. But there are ways in which these inconspicuous people can and do dig again in the old and choked-up wells. You ask how? Well, for one thing, a Christian, who grows in grace, will dig afresh the old well of his religious experience.

There was for many years, in front of a place of business on Wabash Avenue, a tree carved out of stone. It was singularly like the real product of Nature. But during all the years that it stood there, it never grew.

We all know how sadly that is like the lives of some Christians by profession. There is a tendency to "hark back" to what they once were. They are sure that so many years ago they did take Christ for a Saviour. They have no doubt of that conversion. And they are content with that ancient experience. Such Christians never grow. Why should they? Could any man maintain his health and strength, who tried to live on the bread which was fresh from the oven, ten, twenty, or forty years ago?

But while this is unquestionably true, there is another side to be considered. We ought to live over again the experience which we passed through when Christ gave us pardon and peace; but never to rest satisfied with its measure of attainment.

A great general was found a few years ago, wrapped in thought, as he sat alone, looking down upon the field, where years before he had gained a signal victory. His purpose is easy to understand. He wanted to freshen and deepen the experiences of

that critical hour of his life. In no way could he do that so effectively as by going back to the very spot, and living over again that which he had felt and known.

I may cross the boundary between two countries and be unconscious of the fact. But a soul very rarely comes out of a life of indifference and sin and enters the Kingdom of Christ, without certain inward experiences, different from any others of his life. When a lifelong pride gives way, and a man says to his God, "I take my place as a sinner. I want undeserved mercy, and I look for it to Christ alone," that is an hour not easily forgotten. For, it is like cold water to the fevered lips and parched tongue of a wanderer in the desert. It is what Jesus called it: "a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life."

But oh! how the Philistines of "the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things," choke up that ancient well!

Let us go back to it to-day. Will you go out from here to enter your closet of prayer? Will you on your knees ask God to enable you to possess, once more, by His Holy Spirit, just what you knew and felt in that supreme hour of your life? So shall you dig again the old well which the Philistines had stopped.

But the wells were more than one, which Isaac reopened. Was not your confession to the world of Jesus' name, a well of water like those that travellers find in the sands of the Sahara?

I have heard of a soldier, for the first time under fire, who afterward confessed that in the awful terror which rushed upon him, only one thing saved

him from open cowardice. It was the remembrance of his oath of enlistment. The scene rose up before his memory; and the words of his pledge to his country rang like a trumpet in his ears.

Shall we follow that soldier's example? Shall we turn the leaves of our Prayer Book, till we come face to face with the promises we made in Baptism? How unspeakably solemn they are!

Or, shall we once more stand at the chancel-rail as on that day when we renewed those vows in Confirmation? The whole scene is before our eyes; the deep hush that brooded like a spell over the congregation, the felt presence of the Holy Ghost, the consciousness that loved-ones melted to tears, were pleading with God that we might be kept "faithful unto death," and then the breaking of the stillness with the question from the bishop's lips: "Do ye here, in the presence of God and of this congregation, solemnly profess repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ?" Oh, what a "well of water, springing up unto eternal life was digged for us that day!

Have the Philistines been busy in these intervening days, filling up the well of which we drank deeply in that blessed hour?

Oh, let us, on our knees, alone, before God who "searches the hearts," recall that scene. Let us cut deeper in the tablets of Conscience every worn letter of our promises! Let us, like the patriarch, dig again the well which worldliness and selfishness and forgetfulness of God have stopped!

XXI

THANKSGIVING DAY

"Oh, that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!"

PSALM 107 : 21.

THANKSGIVING DAY is an appeal not more to our gratitude, than to our candour and truthfulness. For, as a race, Mankind is much more sensitive to the possibilities of misfortune and calamity, than to appreciate and count up the blessings which God has already bestowed.

When what we call "hard times" hangs a pall of gloom over the country, how quick we are to recognize that the chastening hand of God has been laid heavily upon us! We feel as Israel did when the Red Sea was in their path, and the Egyptians in fast pursuit behind them.

Yet when, like the ancient people of the Lord, we find ourselves, we hardly know how, brought safely through the depths, and upon a shore strewn with riches, the song of Moses and Miriam is strangely silent. The timbrels fail to sound the praises of Divine Mercy.

My memory recalls seasons in which harvests have failed, or epidemics have stalked through our cities. We were prompt then to bewail the judgments of the Lord. But the years of abounding blessing on the labours of the husbandman, and the long periods

of public health, evoked no recognition of Providential goodness.

This day, then, becomes a demand for honest acknowledgment of God's faithfulness to His promises. If the year drawing to its close has been one of prosperity to our country, a sense of honour and of common justice bids us speak, and tell it out.

I. Let Us Ask What Grounds of Thanksgiving Have We, as Christians?

If you know anything of the history of that period when Christianity first dawned upon the world, you know that the old pagan mythology had lost its hold upon the educated class. Men, who kept up an outward worship in the temples of idolatry, had little or no faith in their inherited religion. They maintained it as useful to the empire, and of value in keeping the rabble out of mischief. It was well enough till some higher and more intellectual system of belief should crowd it out.

Something like that is occasionally heard in our day. We are told that the religion of Jesus has served a useful purpose, perhaps is serving such a purpose now. But like the Babylonian, Egyptian, Greek, Roman, and Jewish religions, it is on its downward grade, to be superseded by some better system.

You remember that the gladiators in the Roman amphitheatre used to bow the knee before the emperor's seat, and cry, "O Cæsar, we who are about to die, salute thee!" So (according to the ideas of some people of to-day) a moribund Christianity, from the dusty arena of its last struggle, hails the

imperial world with the confession of its approaching doom.

Is it a true picture? In attempting an answer, I would ask you to turn for a moment to the fields of Foreign Missions. Tremendous changes have swept over China, with its population of a third of the human family, in the last five years. Its political and military character has been transformed as by a magician's wand. It has ceased to be a despotism, and has entered the growing family of the republics of the world. No longer are its armies the laughing-stock of Europeans, or an object of contempt to the Japanese and the Russians. All that you know. But perhaps you do not know that the old religions of China have received their death-blow. Confucianism has lost its hold, because out of sympathy with popular government. The ancient idolatry is being rapidly discarded. The once crowded temples are being used for schools and colleges. A decree of the new government has abolished the Buddhist nunneries. The old prejudice against missions has died out.

In the face of the fearful massacres of a few years ago, "the blood of the martyrs" has become "the seed of the Church," and one momentous fact shines out like the sun through blackest clouds. It is that native Christians exist by thousands in the interior of that vast empire, and that they have proved "faithful unto death."

In Korea, once "the hermit-kingdom," shutting its doors against all the world, the Gospel has spread with a swiftness almost inconceivable. And the most wonderful thing about it is that the majority of the native churches are self-supporting, and constantly reaching out to plant new missions "in the

regions beyond." I have not time to call up the witnesses in darkest Africa, in India, and in the remoter corners of the earth. But best of all, the awakened interest in missions in every Christian land, and especially our own, is such as has never been experienced since the great day of Pentecost. As followers of Jesus Christ, ever with the prayer on our lips, "Thy Kingdom come," this day ought to fill our hearts to overflowing with thanksgiving; and to make us cry out: "What hath God wrought!"

That is not all. Only last Sunday I spoke of the perils besetting the Ark of God, and told you that, like Eli, there were times when I trembled for it. Never was there so subtle and determined a resistance to spiritual Christianity as to-day. Never was there a time when the second coming of Jesus was so indicated in the fulfilment of His own prediction: "The love of many shall wax cold." But mark it well! God has kept His word: "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." I see that standard floating over the people of Christ, in the fact that never before, since the invention of printing unsealed the Bible to the common people, has it been so widely and so eagerly studied as it has been for the last half-century. The sales of the Scriptures outstrip those of any other literary work. No popular novel, no solid work of Science, no national or universal History approaches it in the number of copies in every language of the globe, issued from the press and scattered in every nook and corner of creation.

I can well remember the birth of what we style "the International Sunday School Lesson System." It is the product of the last half of the nineteenth century. It has literally girdled the globe. The great-

est minds in Christendom are turned by it on the same day to the study of the same passage of the Word of God. Commentaries, which only the rich have in their libraries, yield their garnered treasures to journals and magazines which the poorest may possess.

We rarely estimate the fact at its true value. But it demands the thanksgiving from our inmost hearts. A Christianity which thus feeds upon the Bread of Life is not a dying Christianity.

II. But It Is Time to Consider Our Grounds for Thanksgiving as American Citizens

The President of the United States has called upon us to express our thanks to God on this appointed day. It is a national thanksgiving. As sharers in the national life, have we any reasons for gratitude?

Highest on the tablet of our acknowledgments of God's goodness to the American people, and graven there the deepest, let us read the one word, "Peace."

One day I met on one of our streets a company of boys in uniform and playing the soldier with an admirable precision. Suddenly it flashed upon my mind that they belonged to a generation which had never by experience known the realities of war. They could not begin to estimate what it is to have the blessing of Peace, like a white-winged dove, brood over our land from ocean to ocean, and from the St. Lawrence to the great southern Gulf! What did they know of the agonies of a people in whose land the torch of war is lighted?

A few possibly, in this congregation, beside your preacher, can recall the days when the tramp of contending armies shook the earth; when in every home

were forebodings for the soldier-boy in blue or grey; and when along the wires the pitiless despatch bore the name of the beloved one, as among the wounded or the dead.

On this Thanksgiving Day, estimate the worth of God's gift of Peace: not by the millions yet unpaid of the nation's huge debt, but where graves ridge the banks of the Potomac and the Rappahannock; where the valley of the Shenandoah became "the valley of the shadow of Death"; and where the waves of the Chesapeake moan their requiem for those who went down in the Cumberland.

Then turn your eyes toward the regions across the sea. Have we no cause for thanksgiving, when all the east of Europe is quivering with the horrors of war? Think of it, if you can, what is the meaning of forty thousand brave men slain or wounded in a single battle! Think of the whole of Europe conscious of a volcano threatening to belch out the fires of desolation upon the nations not yet involved in the deadly strife! Hate and Distrust haunt the visions of kings. Each people fears its neighbour. The belief is universal that nothing but the dread of superior force will keep any one government from seizing the territory of its neighbour.

O ye men and women of this land, go home to-day to get down upon your knees, and in the contrast of peace that the United States presents, cry to your God in heaven: "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us; but to Thy Name be the praise!"

But before we dismiss this thought of thanksgiving for Peace, I have another word to say. We have just passed through the throes of our quadrennial election of a President. As always, bitter partizanship has found vent in the press and on the political

platform. The party, which has exercised a sovereign power (with the exception of a few years) ever since the firing on Fort Sumter, has been completely overwhelmed. A revolution has turned the nation upside down. New men are at the helm, and new policies are to be set at work.

Let me ask you if you have thought what would have followed such an overturn of public affairs in Mexico, in Hayti or San Domingo, or in the Latin republics of Central and South America?

The defeated candidates would have summoned their factions to arms. Civil war would have rent the land in twain, and the streets of every city would have been stained with the blood of brothers fighting each other! What have we seen, when crushing defeat came to two candidates for the highest dignity of our country? We have seen both bow to the decision of the people, and each congratulate the new President-elect, and wish him success and prosperity for his administration!

Attribute the fact to what you please, this simple truth is behind the acquiescence of the nation in the tremendous change wrought by the first Tuesday in this month of November: we owe it all to the Providence of Almighty God in the peopling, three hundred years ago, of our Atlantic coast. Despite the enormous immigration, there is in the nature of the American a reverence for Law. No infusion of foreign blood has yet overcome the self-restraint and submission to constituted authority, which was in the fibre of our ancestry, whether the Plymouth Pilgrims, the Dutch of New York, the Cavaliers of Virginia, or the Scotch-Irish of Georgia and the Carolinas. Let us thank God that His loving Providence thwarted the schemes of France and Spain to plant

colonies of the Latin race and Papal religion from Maine to Florida!

Once more; the year of grace 1912, must be forever memorable for the enormous prosperity of our country. As I prepared this sermon, there lay before my eyes the estimate of our foreign and domestic trade for the past year, issued by the Government Bureau of Commerce. It simply staggers belief, when we read that the aggregate of imports and exports for ten months exceeds four billions of dollars! Naturally, your manufactures have been stimulated, and millions of workmen have found employment. The argument of the demagogue and the anarchist have been met by the rattle of spindles and the roar of furnaces in full blast.

And at the base of this prosperity lies a gathered harvest unprecedented in American agriculture. We are feeding the world with the bountiful products of this fertile West.

I know of no gift of God so completely beyond man's control, as this of the harvest. The weaver knows beforehand the exact pattern which the flashing shuttle will work out. Each step in the production of the beautiful fabric, is a step which he himself originates, directs, and controls. But has it occurred to you that when the farmer buries a grain of wheat, he bids it a long farewell. He cannot follow it through the processes of germination, and growth, and the production of the kernel in the ear. He has to trust to God's Providence, and to that alone, that any return shall ever repay the labour of the sowing. Whose hand works out all the intermediate stages between the scattering of the seed and the reaping of ripened grain?

Suppose that when a vessel is trying to make the

entrance of the harbour, you take the pilot from the wheel, and let the ship steer itself. If thus guided only by some unknown power, she should drift before the wind, now on this tack and now on that, she should shun the breakwater and the bar, make the narrow gateway of the haven, and with no aid from human hand should glide safely to her wharf, it would be clearly a miracle.

But here is a seed buried in the earth, guided by no earthly pilot through the perils which beset it, and yet escaping the heat and frost, the flood and drought, the devouring bird and gnawing worm, and at last reaching in safety the haven of the harvest: how far short does that come of a miracle?

That wonderful mercy of this closing year has its special appeal to every dweller in Chicago. What has lifted up this obscure hamlet of 1836, to the rank of a great metropolis in 1912? Not the foreign commerce with which New York has been enriched! Not the whirling spindles and hurrying machinery of the factory-towns of New England. Not the mineral wealth which hides in the mountains, and glows in the forges of Pennsylvania. More than upon any other foundation, Chicago's prosperity rests upon the products of the soil.

Men and women of Chicago, this is the hour to rise to a sense of your responsibility! Speak out your thankfulness to your Heavenly Father! And because your hearts are full this day of gratitude to God, may the hands of God's poor be full of your loving generosity!

XXII

A PLEA FOR REVERENCE

> *"And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and God smote him there for his error, and there he died by the Ark of God."*
>
> II Samuel 6:7.

FOR seventy years the sacred Ark of God's Presence had been exiled from the land of Israel. But David was seated on the throne, and ruling over a consolidated monarchy.

No wonder that in the first flush of his success, he seeks to hallow his political and military capital at Jerusalem by the restoration of the Ark of the Covenant.

Are there, in the mischance which overtook David's well-meant enterprise, and in the quick and tragic death of one of those employed by him to bring back the long-banished symbol of God's Presence, any lessons for you and me in the twentieth century?

I. I Find Here an Ancient Lesson in Reverence for Sacred Things

Everything in the account suggests a nation wild with enthusiasm over the project of having the Ark, as a visible and tangible token of the God of their fathers, set up in their capital city.

But all experience and observation show that even

in times of the most genuine religious excitement, reverence is the religious quality held in least esteem. Familiarity with sacred things is apt to result in such dealing with them as degrades what is divine to the common level.

So here. For twenty years the Ark had been in the house of Abinadab at Kirjath-Jearim. Perhaps his sons had come to regard it as a part of the furniture of their paternal home. When it was to be removed, these guardians, as well as King David himself, seemed to forget the solemn state in which the Mosaic Law prescribed that the Ark should be carried in its journeyings. What to these sons of Abinadab, in the excitement of the hour, were the golden rings which Moses had provided to be set in the sides of the Ark? What to them were the rods plated with gold, that, passing through the rings, enabled the Levites to carry with reverence their sacred burden?

The Philistines had sent back the Ark across the border in a common cart; and that seemed to David and the other leaders in this transaction, as good a way as any other.

The whole proceeding was of an irregular and lawless sort. The Ark was treated, not as the earthly residence of the Holy One, but as a mere piece of the nation's property to be transported in the easiest and most convenient fashion. And when the oxen swayed the cart to the peril of its upsetting (which would not have been, had the Law been observed), Uzzah, who had been familiar with the Ark for twenty years of its sojourn in his father's dwelling, attempts to steady it, only to be smitten with swift and terrible punishment.

Now let me say that it is very easy for us, after

the lapse of thirty centuries, to say that Uzzah's punishment was wholly out of proportion to his offence. It undoubtedly was so, if gauged by our ordinary ideas of reverence. But a better use to make of this old incident of Israelitish history is to ask whether its deep graving on the tablets of the Bible may not be God's solemn teaching to you and me, that it is a perilous thing to trifle with what is sacred. Let us look at it from a point of view different from that of the flippant critic of the Scriptures.

I read not long ago, that a teller in a certain bank had been sentenced to ten years of hard labour in the penitentiary. He was a young man. His salary was but a pittance compared with the vast sums of money daily passing through his hands. An invalid wife and little children to be cared for strained his resources to an unendurable tension. In an evil hour he yielded to temptation for the sake of those he loved. He did the dishonest act with the hope—almost the assurance—that his tide would turn, and enable him to replace what he had taken.

And on account of a few hundred dollars, a trifle to a great corporation, he must spend the best years of his manhood in degrading labour, in a convict's cell, or in association with murderers and every sort of criminal! His family must starve or beg. By and by he will come out, very possibly in broken health, to find that a stigma is branded on his forehead, and that every door to reputable employment is closed against him.

That is one way of looking at it. Does not the penalty seem disproportionate to the wrong?

But suppose we look at it from another viewpoint. Why not reason that the very fact that the Law affixes such a fearful punishment to such a

crime is proof of how abominable in the eyes of the Law is the kind of wrong-doing committed? Was not the sentence meant to be a teacher of men's consciences, an illuminator of their moral vision, to show into what an abyss of guilt he plunges who betrays a sacred trust?

I believe that precisely this is why Uzzah's awful punishment stands recorded here. It is what your children call an "object-lesson" to teach you and me what God thinks of careless, indifferent dealing with what is sacred and divine.

This case of Uzzah startles me when I think how many people in a city like this live precisely as though there were not a solitary place for God's worship among all our more than two millions of souls!

Robert Collyer, whom so many of us older men and women remember, preached, before he left Chicago, a sermon on the text: "I was glad when they said to me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." He himself relates that one of his hearers came to him, and said, "Dr. Collyer, I wish you had preached that sermon twenty years ago, rather than one you did preach, in which you told us that it was sometimes better to worship God in the woods or meadows, or in our own homes, than in Church. For we did not need the justification of neglecting God's house. We Chicago people are all of us ready enough to stay at home or to wander about on Sunday."

And Dr. Collyer, Unitarian though he was, confesses: "I had no idea when I said such things as that, how easy it is for people of our free thought and free ways to drift away from the sanctuary."

That was a whole generation ago. If the venerable preacher could visit Chicago to-day, he would

find that the drift away from God's house has become still easier.

Perhaps you urge, that non-attendance is not irreverence. Uzzah rashly handled the Ark. These people do not rashly handle the Church. They do not touch it. They simply keep away from it. Let us see if there is no lack of reverence here. The vast majority of the crowds, who never darken the door of a Church, profess a reverence for Christ. They will tell you that He was the best man that ever lived, and that they themselves would become Christians, if only they could see the likeness of Christ in members of the Church.

Yet not one of them who does not know that either Jesus Christ is not the truthful Being He pretended to be, or else He is keeping His solemn engagement to be wherever "two or three are gathered" in His name. No matter what is the opinion of these people about churches and church-members, every such assembly as this is "in His name." He is here as really as He ever was in the upper chamber in Jerusalem, or by the Galilean lake. Yet these professed admirers of Jesus, invited, pleaded with, implored, to come and meet Him, do not even take the trouble to send what social usage would call their "regrets." They contemptuously keep away from the place where He has appointed an interview with Himself.

Suppose the President of the United States were in this city to-day. If any man professes to admire him, as many men outside of open allegiance to Christianity profess to admire Jesus Christ, they would flock wherever the President is to be found. And if to one of these admirers, he had sent an invitation to a special interview, saying, "I will surely meet you there," then either this professed admiration is a

hollow sham, or else nothing on earth will keep the man from the appointed place of meeting.

Some years ago, in time of political strife and bitterness, an opponent of the statesman who then occupied the executive chair, scornfully said: "I would not cross the street to speak to him." That is exactly what the modern contempt and indifference to public worship says of Jesus Christ.

Is it, or is it not, irreverence?

Do not stop there. Look at some of the motives which lead men and women to attend Church. Ask some of your acquaintances why they do, at least now and then, find themselves in a worshipping congregation?

Because there are churches where they can get the best music in town, except at the Opera. There are some preachers who are more magnetic than any secular orator. There are few places in the city where these people can while away an idle hour as enjoyably as in some churches! Every one of you knows how much there is of that kind of church-attendance. And you know that it is a total misconception of what Church and worship mean.

I never can forget the sense of humiliation which swept over me, till the hot blood rushed to my face, when once a stranger took my hand as he was leaving Church, and (doubtless meaning to be complimentary) said: "I have been greatly entertained by your sermon."

What was Uzzah's wrong-doing? The handling the Ark of God's Presence, as if it were some common thing. What is this handling of the Gospel which is "the power of God unto salvation" according to the Bible, as if it were a song in some concert-

hall, or a play in a theatre? Is it, or is it not, a fearful want of reverence?

II. The Case of Uzzah Suggests that God Did Not Need or Desire Any New Ways to Bolster Up the Ark of His Presence

For it was a new thing which Uzzah did. Not even the consecrated High Priest had ever laid his hands upon the Ark. The very way in which God had provided for its removal from place to place, was evidence of the awful sanctity with which God Himself had invested it. Golden rings were set in it on either side; and through these, rods or poles, covered with gold, were thrust, so that it might be lifted up and carried without contact with human hands. From the days of Moses and Aaron no hand had ever touched that visible dwelling-place of the Almighty.

But emergencies (we are apt to say) demand heroic measures. Uzzah evidently felt that a crisis had arisen, in which he—the temporary guardian of the Ark—must find some new means to preserve it. Possibly frightened by the shouts of the attendant crowd, the oxen drawing the cart make the rude vehicle sway from side to side of the rocky road.

Look! The Ark is tottering. What if it should be dashed to the ground? What if its inner chambers should be burst open, and the very Shekinah unveiled to the multitude?

Had Uzzah never caught the significance of one of the psalms of his royal master David: "God is in the midst of her: she shall not be moved"?

Had not the history of his people recorded the

capture of the Ark by the Philistines, yet that it suffered no desecration? Had Uzzah forgotten how, in the Temple of Dagon, the image of that false god had fallen down before the Ark? Did he not know that the Philistines themselves had been so awed by it, that they had been eager to return it to Israel? Was he ignorant that it had survived every conceivable dishonour that domestic strife, and foreign war, and exile in a foreign country might be expected to do to it?

He forgot all that. The Ark trembled on its improvised carriage. God surely must have forsaken it, gone out of it. And Uzzah must try some new way to save it.

Oh, how unconsciously do men to-day mould themselves after the pattern of Uzzah!

Dismally as owls blink in the light of the sun, some men are trying to make the world believe that Christianity is tottering to its fall. They have not succeeded yet in making the world believe it. But they have roused the fears of some who "profess and call themselves Christians." They are trembling for the coming downfall of the Gospel. They tell us that the Church is not attended as it was once, that congregations have lost all relish for preaching, and that despite organized revival efforts, the world is not evangelized.

Naturally, they devise new means to keep the Church from perishing. They must stretch out their hands to steady Christianity on its wheels.

One of the methods to which resort is most frequent is to substitute something else for "the old, old story of Jesus and His love."

I am not here as a critic of other ministers. But it does startle me to take up one of our papers, and

read the topics on which ministers are to preach, the bread they are to break to starving souls. There are literary essays on George Eliot, and Shelley, and Byron, and Ruskin. There are analyses of Shakespere's plays, and dissertations on the European war. There are lectures on women's suffrage and the lessons to be learned from aviation and the automobile. Why have such topics invaded the pulpit? Because, like Uzzah, the notion is abroad that the Gospel has lost its power, and that the Ark of God is trembling to its fall. The hand of a new method must be outreached to save the Church.

Is not the same thing apparent in the growth of ritualism, especially in city churches? The spectacular display in public worship used to be confined to a few extreme parishes in the Church from which ours came. It has spread far beyond such boundaries now.

Believe me; I am not so narrow as to hold that surplices upon singers is a breaking of the Ten Commandments. But what lies behind this parade of white-robed processions marching and countermarching before a congregation?

Well, the world says that no preaching can attract like the drama. While churches are thinly attended, the theatres are crowded. The more spectacular the more do they draw. Why should not the Church avail itself of the example? The old Gospel does not fill our places of worship. Some way must be found to keep the tottering Church from falling. And our modern Uzzahs stretch out the hand of theatrical display to steady it.

The same thing appears in the social life of the Church. Formerly, the Church was the place where Christian friendships were formed. Those drawn

close to Christ were drawn to each other. In the Sunday School and benevolent societies, and occasional meetings expressly for acquaintance with each other, there was a happy influence to unite the congregation into a family of Christ.

But has not the tendency become prevalent to subordinate the evangelical to the social? "To get people in," as the expression is, entertainment is added to entertainment, and not always of the sort that elevates, or quickens what is best in our nature. The more given, the more is required. Just as a dose of morphine may quiet pain to-day; but the amount must be increased to-morrow, so in this effort to attract to the House of God. The Church that chooses that method will ultimately find itself reduced to the level of one out of the thousands of places of public entertainment. And the world will always outdo the Church in that competition.

After all, it is reducible to the one principle displayed by Uzzah. Faith fails in the power of God to sustain His Ark. Some new human effort must be used to prevent its falling into ruin.

There is one utterance of our Lord which seems easily to fade from the recollection of His people. It is a sentence of four words only: "Have faith in God."

I read not long ago of a vessel caught in that hurricane which swept the South Atlantic in August last. Battered by its fierce fight with wind and sea, it yet pushed its way in triumph over Nature's tremendous forces, and entered its port a conqueror in that terrible ordeal. Passengers and crew were saved, when death had seemed inevitable. All but one! In the height of the tempest he lost his faith that the ship could ever weather the storm, and in

the madness of despair, leaped overboard and perished.

Beloved, I have no fear for Christianity. How could I have, if I believe Jesus Christ, who said, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it"?

The peril is not for the ship which Jesus pilots. The danger is that of men and women, who despond-ing of the Church, the Gospel, and the cause of Christ, abandon Christianity in despairing unbelief. May you and I trust our Pilot!

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